United Nations A/55/PV.70

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

70th plenary meeting
Tuesday, 21 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 28

Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/122)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.22/Rev.1)

The President: I call on the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.

Mr. Nejad Hosseinian (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, let me thank the Secretary-General of the United Nations for his concise report on the agenda item "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization". I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General of the Economic Cooperation Organization and his colleagues for their endeavours to strengthen and expand cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization and various bodies and specialized agencies within the United Nations system.

As we all know, in our current global environment the real world is becoming more and more integrated and, in a sense, borderless. In response, both developed and developing countries have found it expedient and inevitable to pool their resources and coordinate efforts to deal with the increasingly numerous and complicated challenges they face. They have undertaken to establish the necessary institutional frameworks among themselves to strengthen their individual, as well as their collective, capacities to benefit, again individually and collectively, from the potentials and the opportunities of the ongoing and unfolding process of globalization.

Given the state of international discourse on globalization, one hardly needs to emphasize the tremendous impact of the process, which is reshaping the key features of the world economy and global markets in the fields of economy, technology and even culture, and deepening the mutual interdependence of societies.

Simultaneously, an important aspect of these common efforts has been to avoid, to the extent possible, the negative and destabilizing effects of the process. Since few developing countries seem to be in a position to face the challenges of this process, the establishment of regional economic groupings has become the most common and appropriate approach by these countries towards a smooth integration into the world economy. It should be emphasized, however, that policy response to globalization needs to be comprehensive and coherent, both at the regional and at the international levels. Moreover, the establishment and strengthening of regional arrangements in economic, trade and finance areas requires an associated conducive international environment, especially in the field of capacity-building.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-75600 (E)

The Economic Cooperation Organization, comprised of 10 developing countries, is a regional arrangement that aims at the expansion and consolidation of economic, technical and technological cooperation among its Member States. The longer term objective is the promotion of common institutions for the smooth movement of goods and capital among the Member States and the facilitation of their gradual integration into the world economy and their active and meaningful participation in the globalization process.

In recent years, exparsion of cooperation in the social and cultural fields has also received increasing attention within the Economic Cooperation Organization. The Secretariat of the Economic Cooperation Organization, headquartered in Tehran, has focused its activities on finding the means needed at the regional and international levels to address the common challenges facing the member States, as well as to facilitate the organization's participation in the international economy. The establishment of cooperative arrangements with United Nations bodies and its agencies, funds and programmes in particular has been at the heart of these efforts. This area of fruitful cooperation enjoys huge potential that needs to be further explored and realized.

The geographical position and the economic potential of the Economic Cooperation Organization region, inclusive of oil and gas reserves, abundant mineral resources, as well as a rich cultural and literary heritage, provide the necessary ingredients for sound and sustainable economic growth in various fields within the region and strong economic relations with other neighbouring countries and regional economic groupings. There is also a considerable agricultural potential in the vast lands of the countries of the Economic Cooperation Organization, accommodating both livestock and grain production.

It should be added, however, that political, economic, social and environmental challenges in the region are just as great. The transition from central planning to market-oriented economies is among the important challenges facing some members of the organization. The land-locked status of the Central Asian member States of the organization, an area of pressing challenges for them and the whole organization, calls for the strengthening of the transit infrastructure at the regional level.

The free flow of oil and gas from the area to the world market, if not hampered or distorted by politically-motivated efforts from without, can certainly play a significant role in the overall development of the producing States in the region and contribute to the integration of members of the Economic Cooperation Organization as viable partners in the world economy. The rich cultural and literary heritage of the Economic Cooperation Organization region and the abundant opportunities for cultural development could also contribute to the expansion of tourism and cultural cooperation within the region.

As I indicated just a while ago, the challenges before the region are also quite extensive. The protection of the environment, in particular in the Caspian Sea, the Aral Sea and some other areas in Central Asia, are among the major challenges faced by littoral States and concerned countries in the organization. The Economic Cooperation Organization region is also among the geographical areas that are highly prone to natural disasters, particularly earthquakes and drought. Since last year, drought has inflicted tremendous human casualties, having a devastating impact on the socio-economic infrastructure of the regional countries. The region also continues to be afflicted with the problem of illicit cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of narcotic drugs, whose serious adverse impact on the social, economic and security structure of the regional countries is known to the international community and hardly needs to be emphasized.

Turning to the question of cooperation with the United Nations system, the growing level and pace of cooperation and joint programmes between the Economic Cooperation Organization and bodies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) is encouraging and need to be further strengthened.

We believe, though, that there remain ample opportunities and unrealized potential for such an expansion. We are confident that new areas of cooperation can be jointly explored and operationalized with other agencies such as the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in the field of fighting against narcotic drugs, as well as with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Tourism Organization in the area of cultural development and tourism.

I cannot conclude without going back to the menace posed by the illicit cultivation, consumption and trafficking of narcotic drugs in the region. This serious challenge, with its devastating socio-economic impact on the region, is not only a regional problem, but rather a global challenge. And the region has by itself neither the capacity nor the resources to deal effectively and adequately with this menace. Global challenges need global solutions and the commensurate engagement and support of the international community. In this context, cooperation between the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and other intergovernmental and international and regional organizations, especially through supporting the efforts of the transit countries to halt the flow and trafficking of illicit drugs to consuming countries, is imperative. ECO has already taken the necessary first step in this direction through the establishment of a Drug Control Coordination Unit in its Secretariat. Active assistance to the Unit by relevant United Nations agencies, funds and programmes is very much needed in order to combat this rampant region-wide menace effectively.

To conclude, let me draw attention to the draft resolution, "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Economic Cooperation Organization", we have before us here. On behalf of the sponsors of the draft resolution, I would like to recommend it for adoption by consensus.

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.22/Rev.1.?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 55/42).

May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 28?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 39

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/489 and A/55/520)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.32)

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Romania to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.32.

Mr. Ducaru (Romania) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor on a subject of great topicality for the international community as we move from one century and millennium to the next. This subject is the promotion and consolidation of democracy.

We were gratified to see, in early September, our heads of State and Government, gathered in New York for the Millennium Summit, devoting a separate chapter of their declaration on human rights, democracy and good governance to the major role played by the world Organization in the field of democratization, and also making a commitment to promote democracy and consolidate the rule of law and respect for human rights in order to strengthen countries' capacities to apply the principles and practices of democracy. At the same time, they decided to work together for the adoption in all countries of more egalitarian political processes that make possible the effective participation of all citizens in political life.

My country is convinced that the United Nations, because of its universal character, provides an ideal forum in which Member States can work together to refine the functioning of democratic institutions, to strengthen respect for democratic values and to work towards the creation of a genuine democratic culture. We hold this view because we understand democracy as a process that is always subject to improvement and which is nourished not only by the continuing efforts of States to refine it in the light of their own specific

domestic situations — their legislation, their institutions and their decision-making processes — but also by dialogue and international cooperation.

In recent years, the new, democratic Romania has taken an active part in the process initiated by the international conferences of new or restored democracies. This process began in Manila in 1986 and continued to develop in Managua in 1994 and in Bucharest in 1997. Over the years this process has brought together countries from all continents, countries with different traditions and histories, but all imbued with the desire to act together to promote and consolidate democracy, to ensure the respect for and the effective exercise of human rights, fundamental freedoms and good governance, and to establish the rule of law.

The major process of reflection on democratization that was launched by the movement for new or restored democracies has made a substantial and active contribution to the promotion of a common vision of democracy as a key and integral element in development, political and social stability and global peace.

History demonstrates the extent to which democracy and preventive action are the best means of dealing with conflicts in the world and the only way to guarantee that all individuals can fully participate in society. We believe that promoting, maintaining and further strengthening the international debate on the experiences of different countries throughout the world, whether new or old-established democracies, in constructing democracy and on shared values and practices remains a priority aim of our Organization.

In a few weeks' time, my country will hand over to Benin the presidency of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which will take place in Cotonou. Presiding over the Conference has been a great honour for Romania and a very enriching experience. Romania, through its efforts to consolidate democracy and ensure respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law so as to build a democratic and pluralist society and a successful market economy, has always tried to contribute to international efforts to promote democratic values and principles.

This year, our initiative relating to the promotion and consolidation of democracy was adopted by the Third Committee, and we would like to thank all those who made its adoption possible. We believe that it will contribute to strengthening the role of the United Nations in supporting the efforts of Governments to achieve democratization.

The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which, for the first time, will take place on the continent of Africa, in Cotonou, Benin, between 4 and 6 December, will deal with issues of peace, security, democracy and development. With wide-ranging international participation, it will take its place within a long tradition. We wish our friends from Benin every success in organizing the Conference and in completing the tasks for which they will be responsible following its conclusion.

Romania has examined with interest the Secretary-General's report (A/55/489) submitted under this agenda item, and congratulates his team for the drafting of the document. We believe that its proposals for strengthening the role of the United Nations and increasing the resources available to enable it to better meet the complex needs resulting from the process of democratization in the world should lead to in-depth reflection on the part of the Member States.

As the current President of the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, Romania has the honour, as it did last year, to introduce — this time, jointly with Benin, the host country of the forthcoming Conference — draft resolution A/55/L.32 under item 39. I am pleased to introduce the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors listed in the draft resolution. The following countries have also expressed their wish to become sponsors: Albania, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Dominican Republic, India, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Namibia, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Peru and Ukraine.

In the preambular part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would recall events and documents pertaining to the process undergone by new and restored democracies, in particular the Millennium Declaration, adopted on 8 September this year, and would take note of the progress that has been made this year. In the operative part of the draft resolution, the General Assembly would express its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report and invite States to give due attention to the proposals that is contains, including during the Fourth International Conference on New or Restored Democracies. At the same time,

the General Assembly would invite Member States and the agencies and bodies of the United Nations to participate in the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Cotonou, Benin, next month. On behalf of the sponsors, I should like to express the hope that this draft resolution will be adopted, as in the past, by consensus.

The President: I now call on the representative of Benin to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.32.

Mr. Adechi (Benin) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". It will be a privilege for Benin to welcome the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. It will also be a tribute to my country for our efforts in bringing about the peaceful restoration of democracy in February 1990, following the Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation, whose influence was felt throughout Africa and the world.

I should like to take this opportunity, on behalf of my Government, to thank all the States and institutions that have helped us to organize the International Conference. Democracy is developing and spreading throughout the continent and is now becoming universally accepted. We could say that modern history is the history of the progress of democracy from its development to its consolidation. However, the development of democracy has not been without its setbacks. Progress is not always direct, and often there are periods of disappointment. The history of democracy includes compromise and economic crisis, and it is sometimes abandoned altogether.

That is why, having followed different paths towards democracy, representatives from over 100 countries will be meeting in Cotonou, Benin, in a few weeks' time in order to reaffirm their belief in democracy and to evaluate what is at stake and the challenges facing democratic societies and the democratization process at the dawn of the new millennium.

In hosting the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, Benin would like to offer a forum in which a fruitful discussion can take place on the great challenges of democracy, considering it as an ongoing process that transforms society and, therefore, the world. Democracy is particularly sensitive to economic crises, which can make the return to an authoritarian solution seem tempting. That is the problem of young democracies facing the contradictions of underdevelopment and institutional shortcomings. We must also be concerned about the growing powerlessness of young democracies, characterized by decreasing initiative with regard to questions relating to their future or their survival.

How can we support young democracies so as to root them sustainably and stably in the democratic process? That is what concerns us.

Following the very relevant recommendations of the Secretary-General, Benin has invited States from the whole continent to deliberate and to propose solutions. Once again, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the ongoing interest that he has shown in initiatives to support efforts to consolidate democracy in the world.

The draft resolution before us today is aimed at encouraging the Organization in its efforts to help young democracies consolidate themselves and help them to adopt common practices. Therefore, in support of this movement, I appeal to the Assembly to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Mr. Bossière (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries of Cyprus, Malta, Turkey, as well as Iceland and Liechtenstein, which are countries of the European Free Trade Association and members of the European Economic Area, also support this statement.

The examination of this agenda item on the eve of the Cotonou Conference on New and Restored Democracies — and may I here welcome the efforts of the Benin authorities to ensure the success of that Conference, which will also be a success for Africa — affords the European Union an opportunity to express its support for the efforts within the United Nations framework to support the efforts of Governments that are embarking upon, continuing or resuming the road of democracy.

It is indeed important that the United Nations, because of its universal dimension, should be the primary forum for reflection by the international

community in this area and that, with its wealth of varied experience, the United Nations system should support the efforts of States that are now engaged in processes of democratization.

Democracy means adherence to basic principles, and the European Union has already had an opportunity, in the Third Committee, on the occasion of the adoption of the Romanian draft resolution on the promotion and consolidation of democracy, to emphasize its commitment to the reaffirmation of these shared values.

However, if we wish effectively to support the efforts of young democracies, we should not lose sight of the fact that democracy is, before all else, a process, the fruit of a complex progression in which a variety of human, economic, social and cultural factors all come into play.

Without an understanding of these processes and, in particular, without knowledge, adapted to each situation, of the players and the factors that enter into play in the construction of every democracy, how indeed would it be possible to lend effective support to, and underpin, the processes that are under way? How would it be possible to foster the burgeoning of new processes?

The European Union has noted with the keenest interest the report of the Secretary-General, prepared at the request of the General Assembly, and of the recommendations it contains. The report contains some very high-quality thinking on the various elements involved in the establishment of a democratic culture and a democratic society. It rightly emphasizes that any process of democratization implies a radical transformation of values and cannot be limited to the establishment of new procedures and institutions. It is important that every people should be able to exercise its own values and identify the best possible practices for ensuring the success of the processes of democratization.

The European Union wishes to take this opportunity to briefly emphasize a number of elements that guide its action at the international level in this area.

Democracy means, in essence, the effective participation of the people. Thus, the report rightly mentions social development and the emancipation of women as being among the important factors that can help to foster and underpin democracy. The report similarly emphasizes the importance of strengthening civil society and the emergence of a human rights culture in order to consolidate democracy. It is indeed essential that the exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, without which the expression of the people's will is impossible, should be guaranteed and protected and that an effort to educate and inform citizens should be undertaken. Support for the various players involved in democratization is, in this regard, of primary importance.

The construction of democracy is also a process that cannot be separated from the process of State-building. In this regard, actions helping to establish the rule of law and the good management of public affairs, the training of public officials, the construction of solid and independent judiciaries, the transparency of appropriate institutional mechanisms that are accountable for their decisions, and education all help, *inter alia*, to contribute to sustaining democratic processes. The European Union attaches high priority to such actions in its development policies.

After all, there is not just one road to democracy; nor is there an instant recipe or pre-established guaranteed model. In this connection, the European Union would like to endorse the distinction drawn by the report between elections and democratization. The European Union has had many opportunities to lend its support to electoral processes, which always represent an important stage in the building of democratic processes, though not the only element of those processes. The electoral process presupposes a host of favourable conditions in which the environment, the role of the media, the emergence of different political forces, the existence of genuine political debate and the involvement of people who are aware of their rights are essential. Finally, as the report emphasizes, the orderly conduct of elections cannot mark the final stage of international assistance. Anything done to promote democracy must be part of a long-term undertaking.

The road to democracy is open to all and reflects a universal aspiration. The European Union includes among its members a number of States that have travelled the long and difficult road towards democracy. Every State and people is capable of carrying out this process and of making this journey. The European Union welcomes the choice made in this regard by the people of Yugoslavia, who opted for

democracy on 24 September under particularly difficult conditions.

The European Union would like to take this opportunity of addressing the General Assembly to extend its special congratulations to the Secretary-General on the in-depth reflection he is undertaking, which is based on an open and careful approach that takes into account the multiplicity of players and factors that contribute to the emergence and consolidation of sustainable democracy.

The European Union believes that the United Nations has a specific role to play in simultaneously promoting the principles and supporting the processes of democracy. Democracy is by its very essence inclusive and respectful of the views of all. In this regard, the European Union welcomes the fact that the organizers of the Cotonou Conference of New or Restored Democracies have opened that event to all Member States of the Organization without exception, as well as to the specialized agencies and bodies of the United Nations and to many regional organizations that have a role to play in this area. The member States of the European Union will be pleased to respond to the invitation to attend. Thinking about democracy in all its complexity means we must be modest in our views. I believe we can say as a sign of solidarity that, in a certain way, we are all new democracies.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): This is a good opportunity to present the views of my delegation on how the United Nations system can enhance and support the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new and restored democracies.

Democratization is one of the most popular and frequently used words today. We have become very proficient in drafting universal and regional documents in which the most fundamental principles of democracy are enshrined. We can take pride in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Human Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Helsinki Final Act, as well as hundreds of international, regional or specialized conventions and protocols in the field of human rights. Just 10 days ago, the Third Committee recommended to the General Assembly for adoption almost 70 draft resolutions on human rights and related issues. This creative involvement of the entire United Nations membership serves as an important element of the democratization process throughout the world.

Mr. Vohidov (Uzbekistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

It is true that the United Nations is covering practically all possible contingencies that may threaten democracy. They are designed to nurture civil society, protect the rights of women and children and of national and other minorities, promote freedom of the press and protect other specific rights and freedoms. Regional organizations are also very much involved in ensuring that these universal values are put into practice in many parts of the world.

One could hardly find a country in the world that would call itself undemocratic. But let us recognize that we may still mean different things when we say "democracy". There is an urgent need to develop a common denominator for democratic values, a global system of coordinates to measure individual progress on the road towards democracy that recognizes that each nation must traverse this path on its own.

Globalization makes it obvious that effective cooperation between nations can be achieved only on the basis of universal democratic values. Extending such values would be the best way to guarantee that global development proceeds in a non-conflict environment. That is not an easy task, for it requires our common efforts to create civilized norms for our relations.

We note the fact that the United Nations is more engaged today in protecting democracy all over the world, through the provision of electoral assistance and its special governance programmes, as well as by monitoring human rights. In this connection, Ukraine fully supports the relevant provisions of the well-known Brahimi report which stipulate that building democracy on a substantial basis should be the key component of all peace missions and of other United Nations activities.

As a representative of one of the States with restored democracies, I would like to touch on some recent aspects of Ukraine's democratic development. Let me underline that democratic traditions and those related to the protection of human rights have deep historic roots indeed in Ukraine. After Christianity was embraced almost 10 centuries ago, the head of State, Prince Volodymyr, abolished the death penalty. By the

beginning of the seventeenth century, the Ukrainian Kozak Republic had become one of the first historically authentic democracies in Europe. That took place after the Ukrainian *het'man* Pylyp Orlyk, the head of State, authored the first democratic Constitution of Ukraine, which provided not only for a clear allocation of power, but also fully promoted personal rights and freedoms.

This is one of the historical reasons for Ukrainians today to fully appreciate the value of democracy. Because democracy was absent from Ukraine for centuries, the Ukrainian people suffered from endless oppression, foreign domination, totalitarian dictatorships and even from man-made famine in the 1930s, which was the worst case of human and intellectual genocide of the last century. Throughout these hardships Ukrainians longed for their independence while passing their unfulfilled longing for freedom from generation to generation.

Today Ukraine is one of the few newly independent States to have been spared ethnic conflict or unrest. Ukraine has achieved a lot in a very short time to ensure that the process of democratic reform gained momentum and became irreversible.

The rule of law and the supremacy of the constitution have become the guiding principles of our political reality. Presidential and parliamentary elections have been conducted in what has been fully recognized as a democratic fashion. The formation last February of a democratic majority in the parliament of Ukraine has created a favourable environment for enhancing the effectiveness of the law-making process. Civic peace and public accord have been maintained, strengthening the foundations of civil society.

The multi-ethnic Ukrainian society comprises more than 100 nationalities, who live together, enjoying the right to preserve their national identity. Among them are Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Jews, Belorussians, Romanians, Bulgarians, Moldovans and many others. Nine years ago, as a key part of our national rebirth, we proclaimed the principle that you should be as good to your neighbour as you wish your neighbour to be to you, which is still entirely valid. A persuasive argument in favour of that policy is the manner in which Ukraine, in cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, resolved the problem of the nearly 300,000 Crimean Tatars and members of other nationalities deported from our land during the totalitarian regime.

Being not only a consumer but also a provider of security, stability and democracy, Ukraine shares the knowledge it has acquired by further projecting the reach of democracy. The group comprising Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova is a visible new example of multifaceted cooperation incorporated into the very idea of a community of democracies. States participating in that group are committed to the fundamental norms and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. Those countries uphold the rule of law, democratic governance, civil society and the market economy in order to integrate fully into European economic and political structures. That is reflected in the development of their relations with the European Union and other European institutions. Uniting themselves with the advanced democracies, the group's countries foster democratic values within their own territories. Reciprocally, they share their democratic knowledge with nascent democracies.

Our other European partners in this field have a lot in common: they have similar aspirations and are very often faced with similar challenges. The series of international conferences of new and restored democracies, the most recent one held in Bucharest, have provided all of us with the opportunity to exchange relevant international, regional and individual experiences.

During the conference on the theme "Towards a community of democracies" held recently at Warsaw, we further developed, supplemented and enriched mutual understanding and global solidarity in our commitment to democracy. The participants also agreed that it was necessary to go a step further rather than simply to affirm the importance of democracy for human rights and for the well-being of societies.

We urge that this useful discussion continue next month at Cotonou. In our opinion, that forum, to be held in the capital of Benin, should elaborate new initiatives and give us an additional impetus to speed up and broaden the process of democratization on a global scale, with, inter alia, the support of the United Nations.

Mr. Ling (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): At the start of a new century and a new millennium, ensuring the universality of democratic principles and norms is

among the central objects of philosophical reflection, academic study and international relations. It is no accident that the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the United Nations were the basis of the important millennium report of the Secretary-General (A/54/2000) discussed by our heads of State or Government at the Millennium Summit.

Belarus sees great symbolic significance in the fact that it is here at the United Nations — the world's most democratic forum for international diplomacy — that Member States are discussing further efforts by the international community and the United Nations system to strengthen new or restored democracies. Belarus considers that the United Nations should be the instrument for promoting dialogue among civilizations, building a culture of peace, guaranteeing the primacy of law and uniting all States around democratic principles and ideals. That is an immeasurably difficult task. We regard progress towards democracy as the natural way for States and societies to develop; it has both economic and political components. Solving economic and social problems is a key factor in creating not just theoretical but genuine democracy. Imposing recipes for democracy from outside on the pretext of helping States, and the division of States into two categories — civilized and uncivilized, or teachers and pupils — are counterproductive, especially in terms of attaining the ultimate goal: building a genuinely democratic society — not to mention in terms of the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter.

The Republic of Belarus is surely one of the youngest democracies in the world. As a democracy, Belarus is not yet 10 years old. Is that a long time or a short one? It has been long enough for our country to become a stable and reliable State of Eastern Europe. For the sake of the welfare of our own people and of the other peoples of Europe, we have voluntarily renounced nuclear weapons. We have signed the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe and have established independent Government institutions. We believe that a stable Belarus, where the people's choices underlie the policies of the President and the Government, is important for lasting European peace and stability.

Looked at from another perspective, 10 years is not enough time to perfect democracy. In that connection, we agree with the finding of the Stockholm-based International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance that there is no single solution to the problems of democratization. Local conditions, traditions and lifestyles need to be considered because they are essential elements in defining international criteria for evaluating a society's level of democracy. Here, we believe that the United Nations must be in the vanguard.

This has been a special year in Belarus in terms of the development of democracy. For the first time in our history as a sovereign State, we have had full-scale elections to the lower house of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus. Preparations for the election campaign involved an enormous amount of work by all the country's political institutions. The result of that work was the adoption of the electoral code of the Republic of Belarus, which incorporates the experience of the world's longest-standing parliamentary democracies.

Given the participation of more than 200 independent international observers of the Belarus elections, one notes with some regret that the United Nations did not find it possible to send its own experts to Belarus. Largely for financial reasons, the relevant Secretariat departments have in recent years considerably reduced the level of their election-observation activities in Member States. We are convinced that that needs to be remedied, and that the United Nations should respond positively to invitations from States to participate in the development of their democratic institutions.

In response to the appeal of the Secretary-General, the Republic of Belarus intends to play an active role in the forthcoming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies scheduled to take place at Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000. We hope, and indeed are convinced, that the Conference will make a substantial contribution to the development of practical international cooperation in this sphere, on the basis of broadly acceptable principles that show respect for the national identity of every nation.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I wish to join previous speakers in expressing gratitude to the Secretary-General for the preparation of the report contained in document A/55/489 on the current agenda item. It contains useful information on the activities that have taken place as a follow-up to the Third International Conference of New or Restored

Democracies, held in Bucharest in 1997, as well as on the preparations for the Fourth Conference, to be held in Cotonou next month.

Entering the new millennium, we are facing numerous challenges, the promotion and consolidation of new and restored democracies being one of them. In the course of the last decade, an ever-increasing number of countries, including those with economies in transition, have embraced democracy as their preferred form of governance. Although it is obvious that no system of governance can claim perfection, democracy is considered today the best form of governance that is known. The experience of many countries has shown that democracy upholds the rule of law, ensures respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and makes Governments accountable to citizens and decision-making transparent. On the other hand, not all Governments have succeeded in living up to democratic standards and providing the freedom and conditions necessary for everyone to participate fully in their political, economic and social life. Many new or restored democracies still need support and assistance in their efforts to promote and consolidate their democratic choice and standards.

In this regard, the series of International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies is playing an increasing role. In 1988 in Manila, 13 Governments participated in the First Conference; their number has now increased considerably, reaching 80 at the Third Conference, held in Bucharest in 1997.

An important outcome of this series of Conferences is the initiative to jointly work out a code of democratic conduct on the basis of existing international standards. Mongolia believes that the General Assembly will soon be able to consider the draft code and adopt it. A universally accepted code of democratic conduct, representing a basic set of democratic norms for Governments, will, in our view, also contribute to the affirmation of a culture of democracy.

Over the past 10 years of democratic reforms, we Mongolians have been able to considerably broaden our understanding of and knowledge about democracy and good governance. Major steps have been taken in building the institutions of democracy, promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms and unleashing people's entrepreneurial and creative energy, thus facilitating their active participation in the economic, social and political processes. One of the most valuable achievements of democratization has been the change in people's attitudes towards the Governments and themselves, as well as in their ways of thinking.

On 4 July 2000, democratic parliamentary elections were held in Mongolia. The elections were recognized as free and fair by all political forces, as well as international observers, and served as a testimony to further consolidation of democratic norms and institutions in my country. They proved once again that the embrace of democracy and respect for human rights are an irreversible choice of the Mongolian people. The new Government underlined the continuity of policies of democratic reforms. It further underlined the importance of enhancing the effectiveness, transparency and accountability of public offices and the importance of fighting corruption. The Government is determined to closely cooperate with non-governmental organizations and other representatives of civil society in enhancing the rule of law throughout the country.

Mongolia commends the many forms of assistance provided by the United Nations system to new and restored democracies, ranging from its support for elections and promotion of democratic values to institution- and capacity-building for democratization. Thus, in Mongolia the programme on decentralization and democracy support is being actively implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme.

In conclusion, I wish to take this opportunity to reiterate Mongolia's offer to host the next Conference of New or Restored Democracies in Mongolia, in Ulaanbaatar. It is our strong belief that these Conferences contribute to the sharing of valuable experiences of democratic processes in the countries of new and restored democracies. Mongolia will continue to support and participate in this unique process.

Mr. Al-Adoufi (Yemen) *(spoke in Arabic)*: During the past few years, democratic concepts and ideas have spread all over the world. We have witnessed the continuous growth of democracy at the global level, which aims at promoting and strengthening political, economic and social stability. The spread of these international values should not be separated from the particularities of each society, in accordance with its history and culture.

Political plurality, separation of powers, market economy, human rights, fundamental freedoms, respect for and protection of these freedoms and promotion of the rule of law, improving the legal framework of States, improving the social cohesion of societies, participation of the organizations of civil society in the development of democracy, good governance, employment opportunities and better standards of living for the population, could not develop further unless they are aimed at increasing economic growth and combating poverty so that democracy and development can become inseparable.

My delegation greatly appreciates the Secretary-General's report contained in document A/55/489, which deals in general with the endeavours made by the United Nations in this area and reviews the entire process of establishing democracies and the role played by the International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies. I would like to affirm once again that we are fully committed to democratic principles and are very serious about our continuing cooperation with the United Nations in supporting efforts to bring about democracy and to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies.

In this context, I should like to mention the International Forum for Emerging Democracies, which was held in San'a in June 1999, with the participation of 16 countries and of representatives from various political parties, the press, intellectuals, scholars, trade unions and syndicates of those countries that have emerging democracies. The Forum made a significant contribution to the activities undertaken by the International Conferences for New or Restored Democracies.

Democracy, diversity of options, equality, respect of the individual and consolidation of the pillars of democratic institutions, the exercise by the people of their sovereign rights through free, fair and periodic elections, a free press and organizations of civil society — all of this has been achieved in Yemen through democratic institutions and the strength of popular participation in two rounds of parliamentary elections and one round of presidential elections. These were all conducted in a free and fair manner, according to the testimony of international and local observers.

The democratic process in my country has become an important part of our daily life, giving broader horizons to the development of Yemeni society in the political, social and economic fields in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Halperin (United States of America): I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the Government of the United States, to speak in strong support of the draft resolution and to congratulate the Government of Benin on hosting the upcoming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

It is indeed a sign of the times that this body is called upon, with increasing regularity, to consider draft resolutions related to democracy. The recent adoption by an overwhelming vote in the Third Committee of the resolution introduced by Romania on promoting and consolidating democracy marked another milestone in the United Nation's support for democracy.

The International Conference of New or Restored Democracies has provided an important venue for emerging democracies to come together to discuss common challenges and to chart a new future. It has called to the world's attention the inextricable link between democracy and development and the pivotal contribution of good governance and the rule of law to building more democratic, peaceful, prosperous and stable societies. It has reminded us that while the aspirations for democracy take many different forms and speak many different languages, these hopes arise in every region and in every civilization. We applaud the efforts made under previous chairmanships — the Philippines, Nicaragua, and Romania — in making the Conference of New or Restored Democracies a significant event on the international stage.

The Conference of New or Restored Democracies has been an inspiring testament to the stunning growth of democracy around the world during the last decades of the twentieth century. But it also reminds us of the need for the international community, including the United Nations, to help ensure that these often difficult democratic transitions are ultimately successful.

To this end, we welcome the report to the Secretary-General which is now before us, and we applaud his comments on the ways in which the United Nations can help strengthen democracy. We look forward to the discussions at the forthcoming Benin Conference of New or Restored Democracies. More robust democratic institutions, processes and values are, we believe, integral to achieving this body's most

noble aspirations. Support from the United Nations, which can take many forms, gives encouragement and much-needed assistance to those in government and in civil society around the world who are striving to build durable democratic systems, often under difficult circumstances.

The Conference of New or Restored Democracies is one prominent example of how global and regional organizations can lend support to undertakings designed to strengthen democracy.

Another example is the Community of Democracies, which held its first ministerial meeting last June in Warsaw, Poland. The United States Government was honoured to have joined Poland, Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali and the Republic of Korea in bringing to fruition this first-ever gathering of Governments that have chosen the democratic path. More than 100 Governments took part, representing every region, every culture, and every level of development and historical legacy. They endorsed a declaration of principles — the Warsaw Declaration — embodying ideals and concrete practices common to all democracies. They pledged in Warsaw to adhere to these principles and to cooperate to strengthen democracy in States which have chosen the path to democracy.

The United States Government is committed to working at the United Nations and in regional organizations with countries which share these ideals to advance democracy and human rights. In that spirit, I would like to mention the close collaboration between a number of the Governments involved in the Warsaw and Cotonou conferences, most notably Benin and Romania, and members of the Community of Democracies convening group. This collaboration has resulted in welcome synergy between the two conferences, symbolized by the discussion that is to take place in Cotonou on ideas for the agenda for the next meeting of the Community of Democracies, to be held in Seoul in 2002.

In addition, my Government has worked closely on a bilateral basis with the Government of Benin to ensure a productive conference in Cotonou. One sign of the United States commitment to a successful outcome is our sending a high-level delegation to the Benin Conference, chaired by our Under-Secretary for Global Affairs, Frank Loy.

We believe the International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and the Community of Democracies are mutually reinforcing and beneficial. They are united in common purpose in viewing democracy as the essential precondition for a more peaceful, prosperous, and just world.

We look forward to a fruitful Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies and to the opportunity to deepen existing international cooperation to strengthen democracy.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): I would like at the outset to take this opportunity to extend my delegation's appreciation to the Government of Romania for its excellent leadership in advancing the cause of democracy, particularly in the follow-up process of the Bucharest Conference. I would also like to commend Secretary-General Kofi Annan for producing the comprehensive report entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

The spread of democracy since the end of the cold war has been one of the most heartening trends of our times. During the last decade alone, a growing number of countries around the world have adopted democratic forms of government and more people today live in democracies than ever before in history. Despite such encouraging trends, civil wars and regional disputes still dominate the headlines. Moreover, we are facing a new challenge in the consolidation of democracy, which the Secretary-General, in his address to parliamentarians in August this year, termed the "fig-leaf democracy". Nevertheless, all things considered, we can assert that the move towards democratization has taken root as a universal norm and practice at both the national and global levels.

It is our conviction that such a development has been made possible largely due to the key role played by the United Nations, particularly through its assistance in elections and the promotion of democratic values, as well as through the Organization's work in human rights. In this regard, we would like to stress the importance of implementing the Millennium Declaration, particularly its section V concerning human rights, democracy and good governance. All Member States should strive to strengthen their

capacity to adhere to the principles and practices of democracy and respect for human rights.

My delegation shares the view expressed by the majority of Member States that democracy, development, peace and human rights are essentially interlinked and mutually reinforcing. There is a growing consensus that fundamental elements are to be found in both democracy and development, such as good governance, respect for human rights and the rule of law. Furthermore, democracies are less prone to fighting each other, for they inherently support the cause of peace. Peace, in turn, is a prerequisite for development, in the absence of which there can be no democracy, and vice versa. These priorities are therefore intrinsically interrelated. The absence of one hinders the development of the others, and societies that lack basic well-being tend to fall into conflict.

In this regard, my delegation is in full agreement with the statement in the Secretary-General's report arguing that democracy or lack thereof is at the root of many of today's violent conflicts, the majority of which are internal. Hence, there is a growing need to address the issue of democratization in state-building and peace-building operations. Only by our successfully handling democracy-related issues in peace missions will long-lasting peace and post-conflict reconstruction and development be achieved.

In this context, we highly appreciate the recommendations proposed in the expert report of the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. We are of the view that the potential of the United Nations to contribute to the cause of democracy will be reached only once the challenges identified in the report are overcome, including the development of a comprehensive and holistic approach to democracy. Foremost, it must be able to coordinate the actions of various departments and agencies within the United Nations system in order to avoid costly overlaps. Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to reaffirm the strong commitment of the Republic of Korea to supporting the United Nations in implementing these forward-looking recommendations.

The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will take place in Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December this year, for the first time in Africa. We hope that it will provide the international community with a momentous opportunity to achieve significant advances in the promotion and consolidation of democracy through the exchange of lessons learned and best practices. The Benin Conference, following the Manila, Managua and Bucharest Conferences, has adopted the theme "Democracy, Peace, Security and Development," which to our view is remarkably timely and appropriate. In this regard, we note with satisfaction the efforts under way to ensure the success of the Conference, particularly the initiatives taken by the United Nations system, such as the support of the United Nations Development Programme in planning and organizing the Conference. As requested by the Secretary-General, it is our sincere hope that the aforementioned recommendations of the International Institute will be addressed during the Benin Conference in a methodical and comprehensive manner.

The Republic of Korea, in an effort to contribute to the promotion and consolidation of democracy, has decided to host the Second International Conference of the Community of Democracies, to be held in October 2002 in Seoul. As members are well aware, the First Conference, entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", was held in Warsaw, Poland, on 25 to 27 June this year with the assistance of other co-convening countries, including my country. The Republic of Korea hopes that the Second Conference will build on the growing international momentum towards greater democracy and lay a solid foundation for the furtherance of democracy around the globe.

Finally, I would like to add that, despite the progress we have achieved so far, much work has yet to be done. We ought to keep in mind that the process of democratization is inherently slow and at times discouraging. It is therefore imperative that we maintain our patience and all the more important for us to join our efforts and work collaboratively to achieve a world of peace and prosperity in which democracy may thrive.

Mr. Flores Lovo (Nicaragua) (*spoke in Spanish*): On behalf of the Government of Nicaragua, I am very happy to congratulate Mr. Holkeri on his assumption of his high office and for the distinguished work he has been doing as President of the General Assembly.

The Government of Nicaragua would like to stress the importance of the United Nations system's support for Governments that are pushing the new and restored democracies movement, in particular through the management of the United Nations Development

Programme — a body which has allocated approximately half of its budget to promoting programmes in the political, economic and social fields.

Nicaragua welcomes the holding of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held in Cotonou, Benin, in December 2000. Likewise, we are happy to congratulate the distinguished Government of Benin for their work in holding such a major event and are very happy to see the support that they have received from the United Nations Development Programme.

We reiterate our decisive support for the cycle of conferences of new or restored democracies and the follow-up mechanisms established at these conferences, which fortunately have received help from the United Nations and have encouraged our Governments to continue fighting to work towards the consolidation of democracy.

We recognize the outstanding work that has been done by the countries comprising the movement of new or restored democracies. We would encourage them to continue fighting in this complex process in order to install or re-establish democracy as a medium of expression of the voice of the people and of peaceful social living together.

Nicaraguan society has confronted and overcome very many obstacles in a difficult process of transition towards a participatory democracy, in a spirit of tolerance and peaceful coexistence between the various political spheres. However, we still have many challenges to overcome, and there is still much work to be done. This is why we state our commitment to concentrate on overcoming mistakes and shortcomings in order to face up to the challenges presented by the consolidation of democracy.

Nicaragua considers that it is of vital importance to continue promoting the broad participation of all social, political and economic spheres in the country, without exception, in the process of decision-making and in the planning and organization of national strategies and plans so that they will be directed towards achieving good performance of a transparent public administration, towards productive development and towards the building of a common future.

We aspire to be given fairer treatment by international financial institutions, so that by redesigning the structural adjustment programmes we would be able to make firm progress towards a reduction of poverty and towards economic stability, which brings with it the political and social stability that will take us towards sustainable development and the consolidation of democracy.

We would stress that there is an urgent need to promote civic education to teach future and present generations about democratic values. We insist on promoting democratic culture and will work hard to preserve the peace that has cost us so dearly to build and consolidate.

We are promoting all efforts aimed at bringing together the general public and civil servants so as to encourage full participation of these various sectors of society, respect for political pluralism and the need to continue to strengthen democratic institutions and make them more professional.

We encourage the modernization and professionalization of the administration of justice, as well as the adaptation of our legislation to the needs raised by our participation in a globalized world. As a result, we promote the strengthening of the rule of law that can provide us with legal security in society, that favours a climate that will attract private investment, and that increases confidence in the legal order of the State as the indispensable basis for all democratic societies.

We have promoted the respect for human rights and the full development of the fundamental freedoms of our citizens. We would stress in this respect the will of Nicaragua to promote the open development of the freedom of expression. In this context, we encourage the press to be objective and act responsibly so that it can participate actively in the process of democratic consolidation, while carrying out critical and constructive monitoring of public administration.

We are committed to protecting the independence of the branches of government, to promoting the development of local governments and to working further to improve their organization, level of professionalism and efficiency.

On 5 November 2000 the first municipal elections held separately from general national elections were carried out in Nicaragua. The process included the broad participation of observers and national and international observation missions, as well as the help

of prominent personalities on the international scene and representatives of civic and regional organizations, along with special missions from friendly countries.

The observers that I have mentioned were able to count on the full support of the Supreme Electoral Council, the national body in charge of organizing and directing the electoral process. Likewise, this body provided full information on the process and broad dissemination of the results, both to the observers and to the national and international press. I think that this shows our intent to promote transparent electoral processes and the desire of Nicaraguan people to express their will through universal suffrage.

We would like to thank the Organization for the official development assistance that it has given to Nicaragua and all of the help that the international community has given us in the face of the devastating natural disasters that have afflicted Nicaragua in recent years.

Despite all of the adversity that we have faced on the road towards democracy, we know that we are not alone in our battle. We rely on international support for and understanding of our efforts to continue to build a solid and sustainable democratic society.

Finally, we enthusiastically welcome the holding of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. We would encourage all participants to develop an active exchange of experiences and to work together towards the creation of a more just and democratic world.

Mr. Alemán (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his concise and useful report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies, contained in document A/55/489.

Democracy is a concept composed of realities and ideals. Democracy is therefore a system that is subject to an ongoing process of construction and improvement. When a country acquires, or reacquires, a democratic system, it understands better how democracy provides an environment in which the fundamental rights and freedoms of human beings can best flourish, since the participation of the people should take the form not only of involvement in the State's political decision-making process, but of the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

Democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and strengthen each other. On the other hand, democracy originates in the free will of all peoples to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural system. That is why the current Constitution of Ecuador stipulates that the State has a paramount duty to guarantee the democratic system, eradicate poverty and promote economic, social and cultural progress and to respect and ensure respect for human rights — not only those enshrined in its political charter, but also those set out in the declarations, pacts, covenants and other international instruments in force.

Through its periodic plans and programmes, Ecuador is adopting measures to ensure the effective exercise of these rights. Ecuador's national human rights plan, approved by executive decree number 1527 of 29 March 1998, is the most comprehensive and ambitious programme in this area. An operational plan of action and a standing committee for follow-up and development have been set up to carry out the programme.

Since my country emerged in 1979 from a long, dark period of military dictatorship, democratic institutions have been subjected to harsh trials. But they have survived all difficulties and, through its legislation, Ecuador has found appropriate ways and means of preserving the life of the Republic and the rule of law.

Democracy cannot be reduced merely to the convention of holding elections every so often. Democracy — participatory democracy, with social justice and freedom — must give positive meaning to the action of the State and sufficient and valid reasons to its citizens to commit themselves to the defence of democracy.

Governments cannot fail to fulfil the expectations of their people. But they also require international assistance and the support of the international financial institutions so that they can organize their economies and carry out their social programmes. All Governments have an urgent social debt to their peoples. But in some cases they are unable to concentrate their efforts on that duty because over half of their national budget goes to paying off the external debt and to debt servicing.

Any nation that lacks the resources to take care of its economic and social needs, that is witnessing a

constant rise in illiteracy and disease and that is also suffering from an ongoing increase in unemployment, poverty and underdevelopment will find its internal peace and stability threatened. Where there is poverty there can be no stability or development. This truth should not be forgotten by the geostrategists who overlook the unsatisfied needs of the smaller countries merely because they are small and do not weigh heavily in the world balance of power.

Fortunately, in paragraph 2 of the Millennium Declaration, our heads of State or Government recognized

> "that, in addition to our separate responsibilities to our individual societies, we have a collective responsibility to uphold the principles of human dignity, equality and equity at the global level."

For his part, Pope John Paul II has denounced the trend that is affecting contemporary society, saying,

> "Today in America, as elsewhere in the world, we see emerging a model of society in which the powerful rule and the weakest are marginalized or even eliminated".

We must reverse this trend towards selfishness with democratic and ethical regimes based on solidarity that will meet the needs of the great majority and ensure the exercise of civil and political rights, as well as of economic, social and cultural rights. That is why the current Government of Ecuador believes that mere economic growth will not suffice to ensure human development. On the contrary, we believe that policies for economic growth must be closely linked with policies for social development. Without development there will be no peace. Where poverty and misery prevail, there will be no real democracy. Where there is oppression and repression, there will be no respect for human rights. There can be no just and balanced international order until all the peoples of the world have access to the benefits of globalization.

My country hopes that the democratic system will emerge strengthened from the forthcoming Conference in Benin, for which we offer our firm support and cooperation.

Mr. Ouane (Mali) (*spoke in French*): Mali attaches particular importance to the subject under consideration. That is why, first and foremost, I should like to express the gratitude of my delegation to the Secretary-General for the quality of his report contained in document A/55/489. The report provides an overview of the activities and ideas formulated within the United Nations system on this subject. My delegation is also very grateful to the delegation of Romania, which introduced the draft resolution in document A/55/L.32, entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Today, democracy is the most widespread form of government in the world. The wave of democratization that has been sweeping the world for a decade — a process that is still under way — as reflected in the regular convening of International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies, has made a major contribution to the success of democratic regimes. The clearly positive effects of a beneficial democratic experience provide everybody with the best tools to face up to the contemporary world and the challenges of the twenty-first century.

In this respect, may I refer to the words of President Konaré, who stated at the Warsaw conference,

> "The development of democracy is the foundation of a world of peace, a world of solidarity and social justice. Democracy alone allows each of us to assume the burden, but also the honour, of being a human being at the service of human beings."

Democracy is also inseparable from development. In fact, democracy remains fragile if a minimum level of well-being is not given to our populations. In this respect, the international community, must make its contribution to reducing social inequality so that democracy does not just become a simple electoral showcase.

Since 1992, my country, Mali, has been involved in an original democratic experience and has attempted to instil in all sectors of the population a culture of democracy and human rights. In the area of good governance, the Government of Mali has undertaken a major programme of fighting corruption and financial delinquency. Also, in order to ensure that each citizen is involved in the management of public affairs, the Government has undertaken a process of decentralizing power towards local bodies. through the creation of 701 municipalities. This reform was carried out in 1999 by electing politicians at the local level who are directly accountable to those who elected them.

At the international level, the Government of Mali has taken part in several initiatives in the area of the promotion and consolidation of democracy. In this respect, Mali, as initiator of the conference entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", held in Warsaw last June, welcomes the Declaration that was adopted there, which recommends the strengthening of cooperation between democratic States so that they can share their best practices, protect themselves against threats to democratic processes and work towards the emergence of a forum of partnership for assistance to new democracies. We hope that the birth of the Community of Democracies in Warsaw will promote the flourishing of democratic principles throughout the world.

Mali also welcomes the Third Committee's adoption, on 9 November last, of a draft resolution on the promotion and consolidation of democracy. The draft resolution stresses the close link that exists between human rights and democracy and reaffirms the full responsibility of States to defend and promote human rights and to join their efforts to consolidate democracy, the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Furthermore, it stresses that while all democracies have common points, there is no single universal democratic model.

In the same vein, in Bamako, Mali, from 1-3 November 2000, an international symposium was held on the subject of practices of democracy, rights and freedoms in francophone countries. At the end of the symposium, the Bamako Declaration was adopted, which is intended to be both a body of standards and a practical guide for respect for democracy in francophone countries.

The Bamako Declaration considers that francophonie and democracy are indissociably connected and provides for the application of sanctions when there are breakdowns in democracy or serious violations of human rights. Those sanctions consist of a country's automatic suspension of membership from the International Organization of la Francophonie when its democratically elected Government is overthrown, as well as restrictions on the issuing of visas for the de facto authorities of the countries concerned. Mali condemns all *coups d'état* because there is no such thing as a good *coup d'état*.

The holding in Cotonou next 4-6 December of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies — the first such Conference in Africa — is, for my delegation, a source of legitimate pride given the pioneering role that Benin has played in the rebirth of democracy in Africa. I should like to reiterate my Government's support to the delegation of Benin in making that Conference a resounding success.

Finally, my delegation has co-sponsored draft resolution A/55/L.32 because we share the political message that it contains, and we hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) *(spoke in Spanish)*: We thank the Secretary-General for his report contained in document A/55/489. We have carefully analysed it and we believe it provides the framework for a substantive discussion of the issue.

In our opinion, democracy means real, everyday participation in the exercise of power and in the decision-making process at the political, economic, social and cultural levels. Democracy is the power of the people. It is the government of the people, by the people and for the people that Lincoln dreamed of.

As endorsed by the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Vienna in 1993, democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and their full participation in all aspects of life.

There would be no be democracy without freedom, without popular participation, without social justice, without individual and collective well-being and without human solidarity. Sovereignty resides in the people, and without national independence there is no sovereignty; neither is there democracy if there is no development. Democracy cannot be confined to the exercise of civil and political rights to the detriment of economic and social rights.

A rigorous approach to the issue must recognize that the limitations, problems and challenges faced by democracy are present, one way or another, everywhere, at all latitudes in both hemispheres. The South should not be treated with the same attitude that existed in colonizing it.

This approach also means explicit recognition of the fact that no single model of democracy has ever existed, or ever can exist. A serious analysis must accept the premise of the diversity of forms and

models based on national, historical, economic, cultural and religious particularities.

The existence of common concepts in the diversity of democratic forms must not be confused with the attempt to impose representative democracy as a mandatory model for developing countries.

Let us speak directly and clearly: a multi-party system does not mean democracy; neither does democracy require the existence of a multi-party system. There are many examples of countries with many parties where there is neither democracy nor participation. I am proud to say that Cuba has a profoundly popular and participatory democracy, without political parties as intermediaries, where the people exercise power. We ask for understanding and respect for our experience, which results from our history, but we do not offer that experience as a model for anyone else.

The quest for and improvement of democracy should not be confused with the exportation of recipes that serve the hegemonic appetites of a small group of powerful and wealthy countries. International cooperation for the promotion and consolidation of democracy must not be manipulated for political purposes.

We are satisfied with the Secretary-General's recognition of the failure both of the importation of procedures and systems used in other countries and of Constitutions drafted using foreign models, as well as his acknowledgement of the common, regrettable misperception that democracy is a Western concept.

Also striking is the report's conclusion that the implementation of its recommendations

> "necessitates more resources from both regular and extrabudgetary resources than the United Nations currently has available." (*A/55/489, para. 35*)

The report of the Secretary-General does not mention even once the Charter of the United Nations or its purposes and principles. Neither does it mention the sovereignty of States or sovereign equality. It does not make reference to peoples' right to self-determination, nor does it proscribe foreign interference. This report establishes a new correlation between democratization, good governance, human rights, sustainable development, peace and security — concepts that are not clearly set out. This correlation seems to be aimed at replacing the interrelation recognized by Member States in the Vienna consensus between democracy, development and human rights.

The democracy-development relationship is confined to the role of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and to the resources this institution today allocates to programmes aimed at strengthening and consolidating democracy. It seems to us to be of dubious merit that UNDP commits 50 per cent of its resources to programmes aimed at promoting political governance, supporting public sector reform, strengthening governing institutions, enhancing democratization and increasing political participation. In fact, it seems obvious that UNDP has increasingly directed its attention away from economic and social development programmes in order to focus on other tasks — something that constitutes a violation of its mandate. It is regrettable that the main role of UNDP has been distorted, despite all that remains to be done and all the resources needed to ensure the economic and social progress of the countries of the South.

Donor countries' growing imposition of conditions on development assistance to the countries of the South is unacceptable. That conditioning is to the detriment of peoples' ability to determine their own needs and priorities. The role of UNDP in this democratization process presupposes that it is only the countries of the South that need assistance in this area and that only they are capable of making progress towards real democracy. We do not know what principles and values could be taken as the basis for such an erroneous assumption. Cuba recognizes the important role the United Nations system can play to support the efforts made by all countries to strengthen and consolidate democracy. However, Cuba reiterates that this can only be done on the basis of unconditional respect for the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and international law.

We find extremely worrisome the view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General that electoral assistance should not end with elections and that such assistance should be extended to facilitate the establishment of a country's political, economic and social system. Cuba believes that neither the Organization nor any of its bodies are entitled to judge the electoral processes or political systems of its Member States, as only States themselves are capable of making decisions about those processes and determining what assistance they need. The United

Nations should limit itself strictly to providing the assistance requested by a State. It is in no way appropriate for the Secretariat or any private organization or institution dealing with these issues outside the United Nations to assume functions that are inherently a part of the sovereignty of Member States. We oppose the attempt of some Powers to manipulate United Nations institutions in a meddling way, while they seek to maintain immunity from legitimate debate of their own problems.

Another element of the report that we believe can also be called into question has to do with the relationship between democracy, peace and security; including peacekeeping operations or, as they have been recently been called, peace operations. The assertion that the lack of democracy is one of the main causes of many of today's conflicts — and therefore that the involvement of the United Nations in the form of so-called peace operations is essential — should, at the very least, lead Member States to give this matter some deep thought. We reiterate our opposition to any kind of intervention in developing countries under the pretext of the so-called right to democracy or under any other pretext aimed at legitimizing "humanitarian intervention".

We believe the report must be subject to broad consideration in the context of the General Assembly, instead of being relegated to other forums in which there will not be sufficient time to examine it with the necessary attention or in which not all States will be present, and which are not the appropriate venues to debate a report of the General Assembly.

We agree with the Secretary-General's assertion that

> "Democratization gives people a stake in society ... for unless people feel that they have a true stake in society, lasting peace will not be possible and sustainable development will not be achieved." (*A/55/489, para. 19*)

We also agree with his contention that

> "Democratic elections are an important component of democracy, but they do not create democracy." (*ibid, para. 21*)

Likewise, we support the view expressed in the report that

> "[the] connection between elector and elected, and the accountability of those elected ... provides an important training ground for promoting democracy at the national level." (*ibid, para. 23*)

The Secretary-General has thus initiated a debate on the essential concepts and attributes of democracy. Not only can the Western or representative model of democracy not be exported to developing countries, but that model is even being seriously called into question by the citizens of industrialized countries themselves. Over half of those people believe that they themselves do not really have a role in decision-making processes; that they are subject to manipulation by electoral campaigns and the media; that their political model is elitist and exclusionary; and that politicians lack prestige and do not meet their election promises.

Oddly enough, the democratic model used by the main exporter of democracy and the most intransigent judge of world democracy has been undergoing a special crisis in recent days. That crisis is not a passing one; rather, it is a structural crisis. It is also an excellent example of the fact that such a model has long since become distorted and stopped working. That model clearly does not have the attributes described in the report of the Secretary-General. The South should never copy a system where politicians are legally corrupted and bribery is called "soft money" or "contributions from interest groups".

Democracy cannot exist in a society where half of the citizens do not register to vote, or one in which one third of those registered do not cast their votes. Democracy cannot exist in a society where a president can be elected by 26 per cent of the voters, or even where the candidate receiving fewer popular votes can be the winner. A model in which the cost of an election campaign exceeds $3 billion can neither be sustainable nor rational. An election in which 95 per cent of politicians elected are incumbents, where there is no control by the people, and where those elected are not accountable to the voters and cannot be recalled, does not reflect a democratic system. Nor can a two-party system be democratic when it is made up of two almost identical parties, in which it is the party of those who do not vote that is always in the majority.

Let them investigate voting irregularities, charges of fraud and other abuses against African-American and Haitian-American citizens. Let them learn humility

and let them no longer recommend to us, the countries of the South, international monitoring of our elections or issue any further certifications of election legitimacy. Let them not ask us for any more proof of the majority's support for those we elect, and let them instead keep their own homes in order.

We do not believe the demagoguery expressed by industrialized countries with regard to freedoms and political rights while they do nothing to eradicate poverty and ensure development in the South; to prevent millions of people from dying of hunger and curable diseases; to educate our illiterate people; to shelter the helpless; to ensure an honourable old age for our elderly; to ensure the advancement of women in the South; or to offer our children a future to live for.

If left undistorted, the movement of the so-called new and restored democracies could be an opportunity for sharing and support of efforts made by many peoples to consolidate their democratic systems, provided that unrestricted respect for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations is maintained. However, this process is not without risk. The challenge lies in allocating United Nations resources and actions to the legitimate interests of the overwhelming majority of Member States; in putting those resources and actions at the disposal of the peoples who are calling for real and effective action from the United Nations to achieve peace and development so that they can be benefit with the multiple democratic systems of the community of nations. This could help democratize international relations and change the exclusionary, inequitable and unsustainable international order that is the main obstacle to the exercise of true democracy in developing countries.

Let me conclude by thanking the Government of Benin for its work to organize and prepare for the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which is to take place in Cotonou from 4 to 6 December 2000. We assure the Assembly of my delegation's modest contribution to that event, at which we shall indeed be represented.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I would like to begin by expressing my delegation's gratitude to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive and lucid report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/55/489), and for his later report (A/55/520) containing the comments and observations of several countries on lessons learned from their respective experiences in the practice and pursuit of democratic ideals.

The Philippine delegation is gratified that the momentum towards greater democracy, which started at the first conference on this theme, held at Manila in 1988, has continued to generate global synergy for initiatives to support the process of democratization all over the world. From the 13 countries that participated in the Manila conference, the attendance had grown to 80 at our third and most recent meeting, held at Bucharest in 1997. In addition, in June this year the Government of Poland hosted in Warsaw a conference on the theme, "Towards a community of democracies", which was attended by 106 countries with the participation of some 70 foreign ministers. We look forward to the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, to be held at Cotonou next month, in which all Members of the United Nations have been invited to participate and whose focus will be on the promotion and consolidation of democracy in the African continent.

We welcome the fact that the importance of promoting and strengthening democracy has been increasingly recognized within the United Nations. We commend the Third Committee for the draft resolution it adopted a few weeks ago on promoting and consolidating democracy; it received the support of 145 delegations. Democracy and the rule of law are clearly now the normative goal of the international community.

The United Nations should continue its efforts to consolidate representative democracy and the rule of law as a system of government for all. Democratic governance fosters political pluralism and effective participation by citizens in the process of nation-building. Democracy also enhances good governance and the ethical discharge of public duties by those holding the reins of power. We also subscribe to the view that democracy acts as a catalytic force for sustainable development by liberating the energies and talents of peoples. Democracy not only promotes political empowerment but also facilitates economic development.

While the concept and practice of democracy find divergent expression based on the unique historical experiences of peoples, they posses the common thread of participation of citizens in the process of

governance. As a Government that derives its legitimacy from the will of its people, the Philippines Government ensures that its citizens participate in the political life of the nation. That policy emanates from the belief that people should become stakeholders in the political, economic and social priorities of Governments to achieve lasting peace and sustainable development.

No country or group of countries can claim to have perfected the pursuit of democracy. Even established democracies have their weaknesses. But that should not be a deterrent to our resolve to promote and consolidate democracy in the world. We urge the United Nations to make this one of its highest priorities in the new millennium.

When our leaders held their historic Millennium Summit a few months ago, they gave us the unequivocal mandate to pursue democracy and the rule of law as one of the important goals of the United Nations. They also reiterated that freedom from fear and want continued to be one of this Organization's fundamental values. They asserted that democratic and participatory governance based on the will of the people would best assure the preservation of that freedom. The collective wisdom of our leaders should guide us in our efforts to promote and consolidate democracy in the world today.

We urge all Members of the United Nations to support the Benin Conference. The four-point agenda of the conference, as outlined on 15 September by the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Benin, would help address the challenges in the work for democracy, especially in the African continent. We commend the Government of Benin for taking on the challenge of leading this initiative in Africa. Benin has proven to be a stalwart of democratic ideals, and we wish the Government and people of Benin success in this endeavour.

Mr. Preware (Nigeria): Let me start by expressing the appreciation of my delegation to the Secretary-General for his report on support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies (A/55/489).

The Nigerian delegation noted with satisfaction the General Assembly's adoption at its fifty-third session of resolution 53/31 of 23 November 1998 encouraging Member States to promote democratization and to make additional efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies. In that context, Nigeria fully supports the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled to take place in Cotonou, Benin, from 4 to 6 December 2000. The timing is significant not only because of the importance we attach to the democratization process in Africa but also because this is the first time that this international conference will be held in Africa. That historic Conference will thus offer not only a global platform for the strengthening of democratic transformation, but also an opportunity to draw attention to emergent democracies, prospects and challenges in Africa.

My delegation is convinced that the success of the Conference will be assured by the very effective preparations already engaged in at various levels. We welcome the meetings that have taken place within the preparatory process, including those that took place in Cotonou, Helsinki and Warsaw between February and June this year. We want to acknowledge the efforts of the Government of Benin as the focal point in the preparatory process. The theme of the Benin meeting, "Democracy, peace, security and development", is particularly relevant to the development of good democratic governance, progress, stability and security in a continent that has long been plagued with problems of governance and security.

For us in Nigeria, the experience of the immediate past and the realities of today demonstrate quite clearly that there is no alternative to democracy if the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are to be respected. The Nigerian delegation shares the views expressed by the Secretary-General on the links between democratization, political rights, economic freedoms and development in his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We fully subscribe to the idea, expressed in the Vienna Declaration, that democracy, development and respect for human rights are interdependent and mutually reinforcing; their promotion and sustenance translate into an effective conflict prevention strategy.

The Millennium Declaration adopted by the heads of States or Government at their recent Summit here in New York remains a beacon of hope for the whole world, especially the global commitment to the implementation of the principles and practices of

democracy in an inclusive manner that allows fuller participation by all citizens.

A new democratic Government was installed in Nigeria in May 1999. I am delighted to report a dramatic change in the socio-political environment of the country: an end to political detentions, freedom of speech, active trade unionism, independence of the judiciary and the process of law characterize the new national scene. Where there have been abuses in the past, the Government has not shied away from exposing such abuses and in seeking reconciliation between the citizenry and the agencies of governance. Right now, even as I speak, a special panel, called the Justice Oputa Panel, is holding public hearings on past human rights and related abuses. Disclosures already made at these hearings demonstrate both the extent of the abuses in the past and the need to ensure that such abuses are not allowed to recur in the new democratic environment. Hopefully, the ongoing exercise will promote the spirit of reconciliation. A people reconciled is better placed to collectively combat the problems of poverty, insecurity and underdevelopment.

Poverty breeds frustration and multidimensional social problems. Democracy must seek to provide an environment where people are not only able to feed and clothe themselves but also able to plan for development. Democracy must be able to provide that dividend of inclusiveness, poverty alleviation, security and improvement in people's lives. For democracy to endure, it must lead to marked improvement in the quality of life of the people. It is in this context that the Government of Nigeria has put in place various measures that would progressively alleviate and eventually eliminate poverty.

In conclusion, my delegation recognizes the enormous challenges facing the promotion and, more importantly, the consolidation of democracy. A huge debt overhang constitutes serious constraints to poverty alleviation and development. Continuing poverty and lack of development undermine the very growth of democracy. There is therefore a compelling need for international efforts to assist developing countries to rid themselves of their debt burdens and to position themselves for consolidating their fledgling democracies.

Nigeria recognizes the vast dividends that installed democracy and security promise, and Nigeria seeks to realize that promise. We reaffirm our commitment to the cause of democracy, transparency and accountability in governance. The Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies is a welcome forum that must translate international goodwill and commitment into effective entrenchment of democracy, peace, security and development.

Mr. Regmi (Nepal): I am pleased to share my delegation's views on this agenda item, which is of the utmost importance in contemporary society. As a recently restored democracy, Nepal attaches great importance to this subject.

There is no doubt that democracy has proved itself as the best system among all forms of governance. The growing democratization of countries around the world speaks for the strength and popularity of a pluralistic system of governance. Democracy is about the people's rule and about the rule of law. In a democratic society, citizens are presumed to have equal rights, opportunities and voice in the governance of the public domain. Because of these characteristics, people's faith in democracy has increased and deepened.

However, it is disheartening to note that, despite people's deep faith in democracy, and because of poverty, illiteracy and other numerous reasons, a good proportion of the emerging democracies have failed to make any meaningful progress in the area of socio-economic development. Even in those countries where free and fair elections have been held, democratization is only an electoral issue. Electoral democracy is yet to be transformed into opportunities for people to enjoy unfettered civil rights, into the empowerment of the people and into improvements in their standard of living. In other words, in many parts of the democratic world, democracy is yet to be consolidated, yet to be institutionalized and yet to be strengthened. New or restored democracies still face threats from the extreme right and left.

My delegation is highly appreciative of the support of the United Nations, through its various agencies, for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies. We are sure that United Nations efforts in these areas, together with the promotion of good governance and the observance of human rights, will produce fruitful results. We also commend the policy of the United Nations Development Programme to allocate about half of its

resources to support public sector reforms; to decentralization and local governance; to strengthen governing institutions; to develop leadership; and to enhance democratization and the political empowerment of the poor. United Nations assistance in the electoral process of developing countries is also very encouraging.

My delegation is fully aware that the freely expressed will of the people, the rule of law and the observance of human rights in good faith are foundations of democracy. We consider that human rights, democracy and development should go together. Therefore, my delegation fully endorses the resolution entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", recently adopted by the Commission on Human Rights, which highlights the important link between democracy and human rights.

Nepal is highly encouraged by the convening of the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, which will take place in Benin next month. We extend our deep appreciation to the Government of Benin for hosting the Conference. We also commend donor countries, United Nations agencies and international organizations for their contribution to the preparatory process and to the organization of the Conference. We believe that the Conference will provide an opportunity to share experiences, learn from best practices and foster solidarity among new or restored democracies to pursue their common objectives.

At this juncture, I should like to dwell on Nepal's experience with democracy, freedom and human rights. Nepal is a multi-ethnic, multilingual and democratic nation. The system of multiparty democracy and the provision of basic human rights to every citizen are immutable parts of our Constitution. As such, Nepal has shown a great deal of concern for the inviolability of human rights. In order to lend dignity to humanity, we have adopted a policy of poverty alleviation, in the strong belief that the alleviation of poverty will empower people and promote human rights and democracy.

In order to ensure the effective participation of the people in our task of nation-building through the promotion of human rights and democratization, we have recently enacted the Self-Government Act.

I would therefore like to urge all developed countries to adopt measures to increase the flow of resources to the newly and restored democracies, particularly the least developed countries, by enhancing official development assistance, so that our democracy could be enhanced, consolidated and institutionalized.

Before concluding, I should like to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on this agenda item.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): It is indeed a pleasure for me to address the General Assembly on the item entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies".

Since its independence, Indonesia has continuously contributed to the construction of a more democratic relationship among nations. We have worked within the United Nations and other forums to build a more equitable international order in which both rich and poor nations have a voice in global governance, and we have sought to remove obstacles — principally that of poverty — to the free expression of will.

I am pleased to add that as a result of the evolution of events, we in Indonesia are now ourselves enjoying a more democratic and egalitarian governance. After several decades during which we exerted every effort to promote international democracy, we are entering a new era as a more democratic nation — a new Indonesia.

We have regained the democratic rights that were foreseen by the founding fathers of our nation and can more freely give expression to our opinions and differences through the press and in public. The process of transition to democracy in Indonesia has been marked by a number of fundamental changes in our social and economic lives. We have seen the emergence of approximately 150 political parties, and we have held peaceful national elections. The role of the military in political life has been significantly diminished, and the rule of law is being strengthened.

Yet, while we are free to express political opinions, and although political debate has never been more vibrant, we nevertheless remain shackled by poverty, illiteracy and uncertainty. The economic crisis that ushered in this new democracy is also continuing to inflict untold hardships on many people in our country. Millions of Indonesians remain at the margins

of society and have become disenfranchised by their precarious situation. Indeed, like all nascent democracies, Indonesia is facing considerable challenges in meeting the needs of its people and in creating the social stability that is so essential for a sound and strengthened government.

While democracy has perhaps been proven to be the incubator of economic opportunity and development, transition periods tend to increase uncertainties and exacerbate inequalities within society. It is therefore essential for the international community to remain sensitive to the fragility that exists in new democracies and in those that are re-emerging. In particular, international financial institutions should give serious consideration to the impact that structural adjustment has on the people, and to how various economic programmes and external influences affect the heightened expectations that are present in nascent democracies.

For its part, the Government of Indonesia is vigorously working to restore the people's confidence in the Government. Paramount in this effort is the quest to imbue Government apparatus with a culture of human rights. To that end, the reform Government has lifted the previously applied ban on political parties; it has released political prisoners jailed under the former Government; and it has encouraged freedom of expression and freedom of the press. There has also been an ongoing review of existing legislation and the adoption of several international human rights instruments, with additional ones under review. We are doing everything in our capacity to strengthen our democratic structures, and we would benefit from increased international cooperation and support.

The Community of Democracies ministerial meeting, convened in Warsaw, Poland, from 25 to 27 June of this year, represented an important event in strengthening democratic systems through dialogue and through a sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Indonesia views the Warsaw Declaration, adopted at that conference, as a positive document encompassing core democratic principles and practices. We welcome in particular the emphasis that it gave to the promotion and protection of all human rights, and we would underline in that regard the right to development. Also encouraging is the Warsaw Declaration's affirmation of a determination to work together to promote and strengthen democracy, giving recognition to the different stages of political development for each country and the need to respect sovereignty.

Likewise, Indonesia has been an active participant in the International Conferences on New or Restored Democracies on democracy and development. We look forward to the deliberations on these issues, to take place soon at the fourth such Conference, to be held in Benin. Let me take this opportunity to welcome all of the efforts being made by the Government of Benin in preparation for this event and for our discussions on the four indicative subjects that are outlined in document A/55/489.

As the community of nations works in concert to support the principles of democracy and good governance, I believe that it is essential to recognize that there is no one universal model of democracy. Each nation must follow its own course, as determined by its history, its traditions and its cultural imperatives.

In concluding, my delegation would underline the need for the international community to clarify the role of the United Nations in providing assistance and in strengthening its contribution at all levels. That initiative involves, among other things, the activities and mandates of United Nations peace operations and those of development agencies.

Thoughtful consideration needs to be given to this effort, based on the reality that each nation must adapt its form of democracy to its specific needs and conform it to the cultural heritage and traditions of its people.

We look forward to a healthy and insightful debate on these issues at the forthcoming Benin Conference.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): Since the early 1990s, a wave of democratization has swept through the world. There are more democratically elected Governments today than ever before in history. In recent years, new democracies have emerged and some democracies have been restored. Although democracy as an idea and a concept has taken centre stage in the international political debate, its practical application still lags behind. But, of course, the process of developing a real democratic society is a never-ending one.

The strengthening of democratic processes and institutions is a core commitment in Norway's international involvement, bilaterally as well as multilaterally. Norway is therefore pleased to see that

the international community is assigning increased priority and giving its support to national and international efforts to strengthen and promote democracy. This has manifested itself in, among other things, the initiatives taken by the countries that participated in the United Nations-sponsored International Conferences of New or Restored Democracies held in Manila in 1988, in Managua in 1994 and in Bucharest in 1997.

This year's resolution, entitled "Promoting and consolidating democracy", reflects the international community's awareness of the importance of these issues. The draft resolution adopted by the Third Committee was sponsored by more than 70 countries. The Norwegian Government would, in particular, like to commend the main sponsors, Romania and Benin, for their successful efforts to mobilize broad support for this important draft resolution.

Norway strongly supports the group of new and restored democracies that have been instrumental in putting democracy-building on the international political agenda. We believe that the upcoming Fourth Conference of New or Restored Democracies, scheduled to be held in December in Cotonou, Benin, will make important contributions to the consolidation of democracy, particularly in Africa.

Norwegian development cooperation policy has been and continues to be focused on democracy-building in the context of sustainable social and economic development. We have offered financial and technical advice on elections in a number of developing countries. We have facilitated capacity-building and support functions for the legislative and judicial branches of Governments. Support has also been given to the independent media, non-governmental and women's organizations and trade unions with a view to strengthening civil society. We realize that we cannot build democracy exclusively through such assistance, but we can help countries to do so themselves.

In our common efforts to promote democracy, we must stand firmly by our principles, but we should also maintain a certain humility. We should not depart from the principle that democracy involves diversity and choices, equality and respect for the individual. At the same time, we must bear in mind that there are different ways of organizing democracies. Unless allowances are made for local factors, history and culture, it will be difficult for democracy to take root. Democracy cannot be imposed from without; it must be the fruit of a process and nurtured from within. In order to put into perspective what many emerging democracies are going through, we should look back at our own history, not in order to export our own solutions, but to share our own relevant experience. We must accept that developing democracy takes time.

There is no universal model for democracy. Democracy is a concept with a variety of meanings and definitions. No single political idea or system can claim exclusive ownership of the democratic idea or democratic politics. If the world is to develop into a family of democratic States, the best we can hope for is not the imposition of the same democratic model on every country, but a wide variety of applications of certain basic democratic principles.

From our point of view, the following shortlist of principles is associated with the idea of democracy. Democracy requires that authority rests with the people and that the Government be accountable to the people. The purpose of a democratic Government as an instrument of the authority of the people is to secure equality and freedom. Democracy requires the widest possible participation. Democracy rests on a system of institutions, laws and regulations that ensure that the will of the people is expressed at the level of government decisions. Democracy rests on a system of checks and balances. Democracy is a system of deliberation to arrive at effective decisions based on the diverse and conflicting views and interests of the people. Democracy is a system for the selection and renewal of national leadership that is accountable to the people. Any political regime that wants to be recognized as democratic will, in our opinion, have to respect all of these fundamental principles.

The rule of law; transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs; respect for human rights; and the full participation of all citizens in the decisions of Government — these are all essential conditions for democracy and for the kind of growth and prosperity that make development possible. The genuine political will to achieve democratic development must come from within the country itself and from its people. Only thus will cooperation with the aim of strengthening democratic institutions have meaning and only thus will it be able to succeed.

The Acting President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/18 of 10 November 1978 and decision 53/453 of 18 December 1998, I call on the observer for the International Organization of la Francophonie.

Mr. Bouabid (International Organization of la Francophonie) (*spoke in French*): The question of support for the promotion and consolidation of new or restored democracies is of particular interest to the International Organization of la Francophonie. This is, first, because one of the priority objectives of the organization is to assist in the establishment and development of democracy, as stipulated in its charter, and because Francophonie attaches particular importance in its objectives to cooperation with other international organizations, in particular with the United Nations system, with which we are linked by several cooperation agreements.

In our activities over the past 10 years with respect to the democratization process, the International Organization of la Francophonie has consistently promoted cooperation with the United Nations, particularly in the promotion of human rights, in observing and assisting elections and, more generally, in fostering a common understanding of the dynamics of democratization.

This explains the support given by the International Organization of la Francophonie for the holding of the Third International Conference of New or Restored Democracies, held in Bucharest in September 1997, for the holding of the regional conference in February 2000 in Cotonou — which was part of the preparatory process for the Fourth Conference — as well as for the holding of this Fourth Conference, to be held next month in Cotonou.

Given the importance of the subject dealt with at the regional conference — an assessment of national conferences and other processes of democratic transition in Africa — the International Organization of la Francophonie, through its intergovernmental agency, and in partnership with the authorities of Benin, participated in the organization of this conference, which also marked the tenth anniversary of the Conference of the Active Forces of the Nation in Benin. The report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations submitted to this session of the General Assembly makes a reference to that important Conference.

The International Organization of la Francophonie made important expert knowledge available for the scientific preparation of and introductory studies to the debates held during the conference last February. It contributed to identifying and ensuring the presence of individuals who have played an important role in the process of transition. It also made a contribution by ensuring that there was a significant representation of French-speaking African delegations. This will be the case as well at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies.

The International Organization also provided logistical support for the conference in February, as well as computer-related materials, which will also be used for the Fourth Conference. Finally, it is publishing the proceedings of the conference in February, which will be widely distributed in Cotonou in December. Financial and logistical aid is also being given to the Fourth Conference itself. The whole of the investments made by the International Organization amounts to some 2.5 million French francs.

In addition, in order to deepen their dialogue and their cooperation in the area of democracy and respect for freedoms, the heads of State or Government of French-speaking countries, meeting in Moncton in September 1999 at the Eighth Francophone Summit, decided to hold a symposium on the assessment of practices of democracy, rights and freedoms in French-speaking countries, to which the representative of Mali referred a few moments ago. They also decided that this symposium, which would be prepared jointly with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, should allow the International Organization to highlight at the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies its major achievements. This symposium just took place in Bamako, from 1 to 3 November 2000, under the leadership of Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré, President of the Republic of Mali, with over 400 participants, including the representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Ibrahima Fall, and the representatives of several bodies of the United Nations system.

The preparation of the symposium involved a great deal of consciousness-raising and mobilization of all key players and figures of the democratic process in French-speaking countries, involving not only States and Governments but also political parties, members of

Parliaments, trade unions, the media, non-governmental organizations and all components of civil society, as well as international organizations.

Allow me to mention some of the results of the preparatory work, which, in echoing directly the questions brought up in the report of the Secretary-General presented to this Assembly, add to today's debate.

With regard to the assessment that emerged from the preparatory work, I think several points should be stressed. Although this assessment related to French-speaking countries, it also has global application on many points. The assessment of more than 10 years of democratization has certainly given us a very varied picture.

With regard to institutions of democracy and of the rule of law, the last 10 years have been marked by constitutional burgeoning, where we have seen pluralist democracy and the rule of law flourish in French-speaking countries. But the institutions that have been established — classical institutions, parliamentary assemblies, judicial systems or new institutions, such as constitutional courts, ombudsmen, national independent electoral commissions and others — have basic problems with regard to their actual independence, as well as to their financial and material autonomy. The challenge is therefore to make these institutions effective and to ensure that they play their role in democratic life. There is still much to be done with regard to improving the conditions of the functioning and the independence of Parliaments and judicial systems, as well as of the supreme authorities for monitoring, mediation and regulation. These improvements will require an increase in human and material resources.

With regard to elections, significant progress has been made over the past decade concerning the holding of elections that are free, transparent and in line with the essential standards of democracy and the rule of law. But at the same time, electoral processes — which are sometimes carried out in a context marked by the newness of the institutions responsible for carrying them out, the insufficient preparation of many of those involved, difficult socio-economic conditions, mentalities that are often resistant to change or electoral assistance and international cooperation that have been slow to adapt — have very often been at the basis of tensions and even of upsetting consensuses or civil harmony.

The question of electoral lists is crucial and is linked to the imperative need to establish a solid civil State. It is the whole of the electoral process, from the preparation of the election to the voting, that must receive the attention of the players in political life and in the area of cooperation. In the electoral processes that have enabled us to bring about the changing of Governments, we must stress the very important role of civil society, the press and new technologies.

The assessment concerning the responsibility of the structures in charge of elections is also a rather varied picture. The problems relate to the appropriateness of the tasks that these institutions have and the resources allocated to them. The question of consistency is thus fundamental; hence the need for targeted measures, particularly in order to strengthen the capacity of States to manage electoral operations.

Another problem relates to the criteria that allow us to declare that elections have been free, just and transparent. In that regard, the coordination meeting with international organizations that was held on 28 April 2000 in Paris enabled us to recognize the need for working together in order to identify operational parameters.

With regard to political life, the role of constitutions, in their institutional dimension and as a charter of freedoms, arises. We need to ask whether constitutions in themselves are a source of political crises. The importance of the institutional framework laid down by a constitution has to be put in perspective; in effect, apart from the legal architecture provided by the constitution, it is very often a matter of the quality of the democratic culture inspiring the political game.

The question of what attitude to adopt towards the question of the influence of ethnic diversity in the political life of States also remains crucial. All societies have fragmentations — social, religious and ethnic. Should these identities, consequently, become politicized? Should they leave their social context to move into the political arena and be subject to the law of the republic? Would we not then be risking the ethnicization of political life, which would give rise to legitimate fears and, in a number of countries, become the subject of specific measures to prevent this?

Would it be possible to avoid considering that ethnic divisions amount to basic political differences by seeing ethnicity as an expression of diversity and not of antagonism? Is violence not always associated with a will for hegemonistic domination, with problems arising where there is a lack of justice, a lack of respect for human rights and inequalities in development? And the overly frequent pursuit of power for the sake of rewards — politics being seen as a way of getting rich for politicians and their clans; does this not contribute to intensifying the stakes of political life, very often with the ethnic factor being exploited for political ends? These are the essential questions that, at the dawn of the new century, are not asked only in the new or restored democracies.

It has been noted that democratic culture rests not only on institutions and standards but on attitudes and practices inspired by a specific idea of politics as providing a space for the confrontation of ideas and for conciliation and legitimate arbitration between interests. The responsibility of political players must be stressed. The quality of democratic politics and, hence, the effectiveness of democracy and the rule of law, can be measured by the functioning of transparent mechanisms for mediating and resolving conflicts.

The ideas that were freely expressed at the Bamako symposium led to a draft declaration and programme of action which was submitted to the participants of the Bamako meeting. Supplemented with the results of the work of the round tables that took place within the framework of the symposium, those drafts were approved by the heads of Government delegations, which met in a working meeting, and the Bamako Declaration was solemnly adopted at a plenary meeting on 3 November 2000.

This document, which is the result of 10 years of commitment to the process of democratization on the part of the International Organization of la Francophonie, is of great importance to the French-speaking community. Indeed, the adoption of the Bamako Declaration provided the organization with a standard-setting text on democracy, bringing together in the service of democracy, for the first time, States, Governments, parliamentarians, mayors, experts, university teachers, representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), civil society and the media.

The International Organization of la Francophonie has not only declared that the organization and democracy are inseparably linked, but, furthermore, expressed clearly and for the first time its rejection of the seizure of power by force, giving itself the means to react vigorously to any interruption of the democratic process or assault on human rights in French-speaking regions. Specific procedures have been adopted to deal with crises, the breakdown of democracy and serious or mass violations of human rights. Henceforth, in the event of a military *coup d'etat* against a democratically-elected regime, that country's membership in the organization will be suspended.

The organization intends to diversify and intensify its cooperation activities in support of democracy, increasingly mobilizing its efforts so as to assist in the fulfilment of strategic commitments undertaken by its member States and Governments in the interests of renewed partnership and active solidarity.

Finally, the organization is truly making progress — as the heads of State or Government, meeting in Moncton, hoped that it would — towards a meaningful stage in its dialogue on the strengthening of democracy and respect for freedom in French-speaking countries, affirming, in this context, its full political dimension.

With regard to this important development, three points should be stressed in the context of the coming Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies. First, throughout the Bamako process, and in the Declaration itself, it was recalled that, for the International Organization of la Francophonie, there is no single way of organizing democracy and that, while respecting universal principles, forms of democratic expression must be seen within the context of the specific historical, cultural and social realities of every people. Furthermore, we must stress that the representatives of the new or restored democracies themselves appealed strongly for the organization to condemn, in no uncertain terms, the taking of power by force and for it to take firm steps with regard to *coups d'etat* against democratically elected regimes.

Secondly, the Bamako Declaration stresses that democratic principles, in all their political, economic, social, cultural and legal dimensions, must also be the hallmark of international relations. The International

Organization of la Francophonie is firmly committed to the democratization of international relations, and it intends to step up its cooperation with other international and regional organizations, develop dialogue with a view to democratizing international relations and, in this framework, support initiatives to promote democracy.

Finally, the Bamako Declaration stresses the scale of the challenge represented by the participation in democratic life of all citizens, both men and women, including the poorest and the most disadvantaged. This implies that civil society must be mobilized to promote a culture of democracy, that partnerships be developed between the public and private sectors and that mechanisms be strengthened for dialogue with NGOs working in the area of democracy and human rights.

Those are some of the thoughts that I wanted to share with the Assembly as part of our debate today. Our organization will be represented at the Cotonou Conference, in accordance with the wishes of our heads of State or Government. The delegation will be headed by our Secretary-General, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The organization will share its experience and also offer its full cooperation to the United Nations in support of efforts aimed at promoting and consolidating democracy and respect for human rights.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate for this meeting.

At the request of the sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.32, action on the draft resolution will be postponed until Monday, 27 November 2000, when it will be taken up as the first item.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.71

General Assembly
Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

71st plenary meeting
Monday, 27 November 2000, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 39 (*continued*)

Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/489, A/55/520)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.32/Rev.1)

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): Since I am the lone speaker on this item in this meeting, I should like to mention that agenda item 39, "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies", is one which is very close to the heart of the Bangladesh delegation. We believe that this item, since it first appeared before the General Assembly, has articulated the aspirations and objectives of the countries that fall into the category of new or restored democracies.

We believe that the first three Conferences of New or Restored Democracies, held in the Philippines, in Nicaragua and, finally, in 1997, in Romania, have established very effectively the foundations on which democratic institutions and the process of democratization can be consolidated, and we hope that, for this purpose, the Secretary-General will provide the strongest support in the efforts of countries to strengthen democratic institutions. The support measures which the Secretary-General has presented in his report very effectively articulate the issues which are of importance, and we believe that it will be appropriate for the Assembly to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1, of which Bangladesh is a sponsor, by consensus.

We would particularly like to support the presence of the Secretary-General at the Fourth Conference, in Cotonou, Benin, next week. We look forward to his milestone statement on that occasion. It has been mentioned that it will be the most forward-looking statement that the Secretary-General has presented with regard to new and restored democracies and the support that Governments could receive from the United Nations system.

In his report, the Secretary-General gives us a comprehensive overview of the activities and ideas of the United Nations concerning the subject under consideration. It is also appropriate that, in outlining the continuing process of change in the international arena, the Secretary-General provides us with a powerful and ever-increasing impetus for strengthening support to the global process of democratization.

In the present international setting, only democratization can help States to effectively address many challenges of today's world. It can help States in formulating policies for the new century. Democracy and development are inseparable in the context of the present-day world. On their road to development and democratization, the developing countries of the world

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-76253 (E)

depend, to a great extent, on the cooperation and support of the international community.

The United Nations can play a major proactive role in taking forward this process through innovative and wide-ranging programmes: the strengthening and promotion of democracy should be a key, continuing objective of the activities of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. The Secretary-General needs to ensure this through his leadership of the system, particularly through the Administrative Committee on Coordination process. We believe it would be useful for all of us if the Secretary-General were to bring out a compendium of the pronouncements on democracy included in all major intergovernmental decisions of the United Nations and international and regional organizations and forums. We request the Secretary-General to do that, and we strongly believe that this information, being very extensive, will promote solidarity among the democracies of the world.

To us in Bangladesh, democracy is a cardinal principle of governance. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reiterated this when she spoke at the Security Council Summit in New York last September. Enhancing the democratic process has been a rewarding experience and exercise in our nation-building endeavour.

In Bangladesh, institutions and laws have been put in place and strengthened to reinforce democracy and promote good governance with a view to promoting social cohesion and integration and ensuring the participation of the people. Bangladesh is seriously engaged in decentralization of power to the local bodies. Encouraging the participation of women has resulted in the election of as many as 14,000 women members to these local bodies. We have embarked on a comprehensive programme of reform and deregulation. The commitment of Bangladesh to democracy and the rule of law prompted us to accord priority to human rights. Bangladesh believes in the centrality of the right to development within the human rights regime.

Social development has remained the main focus of our development strategy. Education, health care and women's empowerment within the broad framework of human development continue to receive priority attention. The rights of women and children are focused upon. The role and involvement of civil society in our development and democratization efforts, particularly in the social sector, have been very extensive.

We strongly recommend that the world body improve the capacity of the Organization to respond effectively to the request of Member States for support for their democratization efforts. While doing so, we also recognize the responsibility of each country in ensuring peace, justice, equality, human rights, individual freedom, rule of law, pluralism, development and better standards of living.

In this respect, we must bear in mind that democracy is based on the freely expressed will of the people to determine their own political, economic, social and cultural systems and on their full participation in all aspects of their lives. We must recognize the essential values of democracy, such as free and transparent elections, development and peace, and see to it that they are not undermined in any way.

In this context, we would like to draw attention to the final Warsaw Declaration entitled "Towards a Community of Democracies", which was adopted last June by an international conference in Poland of more than 100 countries. Bangladesh made its humble contribution to its consensus adoption. I would like to quote a part of that Declaration:

> "We will seek to strengthen institutions and processes of democracy. We appreciate the value of exchanging experience in the consolidation of democracy and identifying best practices. We will promote discussions and, where appropriate, create forums on subjects relevant to democratic governance for the purpose of continuing and deepening our dialogue on democratization. We would focus our deliberations on our common principles and values rather than extraneous bilateral issues between members. We resolve jointly to cooperate to discourage and resist the threat to democracy posed by the overthrow of constitutionally elected governments."

My delegation is happy to note that the follow-up process to the implementation of the recommendations adopted in Bucharest has produced such good results as Web site and database inventories and the democracy forum.

We are also happy to note that preparations are well advanced for the Fourth International Conference, which is to be held in Benin from 4 to 6 December.

Bangladesh will be represented at the Cotonou Conference by our Foreign Minister. We understand that Secretary-General Kofi Annan will attend the Conference and that he is expected to make a major policy statement on the role of the United Nations in democratization in the twenty-first century. My delegation commends the Secretary-General for his initiative and looks forward to his statement in Cotonou.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall now proceed to consider draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1. I should like to announce that since its publication, Ireland has become a sponsor of draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1?

Draft resolution A/55/L.32/Rev.1 was adopted (resolution 55/43).

The President: I call on the representative of Poland, who wishes to speak in explanation of position on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Stańczyk (Poland): I have taken the floor on behalf of the members of the Convening Group of the Community of Democracies, namely, Chile, the Czech Republic, India, Mali, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the United States of America and my own country, Poland, to welcome the adoption of the resolution entitled "Support by the United Nations system of the efforts of Governments to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies". The Convening Group notes with satisfaction that this resolution has been adopted by consensus, and thus the entire membership of the United Nations has spoken resolutely with one voice on the issue of democracy, which is a matter of utmost importance not only for the States on whose behalf I am speaking, but for the international community at large.

The world leaders who gathered here at the United Nations on the occasion of the Millennium Summit committed themselves to promoting democracy by strengthening the capacity of their countries to implement the principles and practices of democracy. That crystal-clear commitment is already being implemented. On 4 December at Cotonou, Benin, the Fourth International Conference of New or Restored Democracies will open its deliberations. The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies strongly appeals to all Member States to be represented at that Conference at the highest possible level and to participate actively in it. I can assure the Assembly that the eight States of the Convening Group, on whose behalf I am speaking, will respond to this appeal positively.

The Convening Group of the Community of Democracies once again underlines its strong interest in promoting democracy and democratization in the world. We deeply believe that our approach and determination will stimulate and facilitate the efforts of other Governments, as well as those of international organizations, to intensify their national and international action to strengthen the rule of law, further develop and enhance democratic institutions and mechanisms and strongly stand by democratic ideals.

The President: We have heard the only speaker in explanation of position.

May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 39?

It was so decided.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/82, A/55/494, A/55/637)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.38)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/90, A/55/92, A/55/123, A/55/124, A/55/125, A/55/212, A/55/317, A/55/319, A/55/333, A/55/347, A/55/415, A/55/416, A/55/418, A/55/620)

Draft resolutions (A/55/L.16, A/55/L.35, A/55/L.36 and A/55/L.41)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/137)

The President: I should like to inform members that sub-item (d), entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", will be considered with agenda item 46 at a later date.

I should also like to inform Members that, in a letter dated 6 October 2000 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on sub-item (a) of agenda item 20, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations".

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion, it is proposed that the General Assembly should take a decision on that request.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear a statement by the observer of Switzerland in the debate on agenda item 20 and its sub-items (a) to (c)?

It was so decided.

The President: I give the floor to the representative of Tajikistan to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.41.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan takes a positive view of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations", as contained in document A/55/82. On the whole, this document gives a clear and comprehensive picture of the work of the United Nations in the humanitarian field. We note a marked improvement in the quality of the document, as compared with last year's report. This pertains in particular to the larger amount of information, the depth of analysis, as well as the presentation of specific recommendations on the problems.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations in extending extraordinary humanitarian assistance, which is making a tangible contribution to overcoming the consequences of natural disasters, man-made disasters, and other emergency situations and is contributing to the stabilization of the situation in various crisis points of the world.

As concerns international humanitarian assistance, I would like to emphasize the importance of observing its fundamental principles — that is, neutrality, a humane approach, impartiality and the lack of any political conditions, respect for sovereignty and the territorial integrity of States. Humanitarian assistance must, of course, be given with the consent of the country that has suffered the disaster and in accordance with international law and national legislation.

Tajikistan attaches great importance to the concept of humanitarian limits on sanctions. We consider that, in determining any sanctions regime, one must be guided by clear-cut criteria and take account of the consequences, both for the population of the country undergoing the sanctions and for that of third countries. We believe that there is need for a humanitarian approach to sanctions and that they need to be properly targeted. International humanitarian organizations ought to be exempted from the effects of sanction limitations. Sanctions should not be applied to foodstuff supplies, medicines, or other emergency supplies to the civilian population. In our view, it is also important to protect particularly vulnerable groups of the population from the consequences of sanctions.

Looking at last year's report by the Economic and Social Council on this subject, we think there are grounds for certain optimism in this area. Furthermore, we think it is important to continue work on rendering sanction regimes more humanitarian.

We attach great importance to strengthening the coordination machinery and instruments in the field of humanitarian assistance. This applies, first and foremost, to the work of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee and the consolidated inter-agency appeals. We note an improvement in the procedure for preparing appeals and the usefulness of publishing them all at the same time. We hope that the new consolidated United Nations appeal for 2001 to be issued tomorrow, will be successful and will meet with a positive reaction on the part of the donor community.

While agreeing with what the report says about the importance of strengthening multilateral humanitarian assistance, we consider that it should not compete with bilateral assistance. Multilateral and bilateral assistance, along with the contribution of the humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs), need to be part of a single whole, and, to the extent possible, should be taken into account in this context in inter-agency appeals in order to get the fullest possible picture of assistance.

We share the concern voiced in the report about the low level — about 27 per cent — of coverage of the financial needs presented in the inter-agency appeals for the year 2000. Clearly, additional efforts are needed in order to mobilize financing; that would include also the so-called "forgotten" emergency situations.

The increase in the incidence of natural and other disasters in recent years, and the consequent increase in the scale of human and material losses, have placed new demands on the international community in this sphere. One priority area for the development of such cooperation, in our view, is the effective utilization of the most advanced and highly specialized technologies for dealing with catastrophes. We take a positive view of the section of the report dealing with the role played by technology. It is our view that this is a step in the right direction. However, one must note that this section of the report is mainly devoted to computerization, telecommunications and space technologies, which are involved at the early-warning and disaster prevention stages. Almost no information or analysis is provided relating to the use of technology for bringing help or rescue when actually dealing with the consequences of a disaster.

It is important to intensify the efforts of the United Nations to strengthen the international capacity to react to disasters, with emphasis on the utilization of the most advanced specialized technologies in carrying out rescue operations and in work to clear up the aftermath of natural disasters. We believe that this could be facilitated by preparing a comprehensive inventory of the available technological capacity at the national, regional and international levels, as well as recommendations for making fuller use thereof.

We greatly appreciate the work of the United Nations to extend humanitarian assistance to all countries that need it — without exception — whether as a result of complex emergency situations, natural disasters or man-made disasters.

On behalf of the sponsors, including Bangladesh, India, the Republic of Korea and Japan, the delegation of Tajikistan has the honour to introduce the draft resolution entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation of Tajikistan". The consideration and adoption by the General Assembly of this resolution testifies to the real support given by the international community to post-conflict peace-building in Tajikistan.

The continuation of the United Nations humanitarian programmes in my country will help to supplement the efforts of my Government to consolidate the peace process and will have a substantial effect in strengthening the favourable conditions that are now emerging for economic recovery and for sustained development.

We are grateful to the Secretary-General for elaborating the recent 2000 consolidated inter-agency appeal for humanitarian assistance.

The draft resolution now before us, among other things, welcomes the implementation of the main provisions of the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan. It expresses appreciation for the important role played by the United Nations in the peace process; expresses appreciation to all States and international organizations for their contribution to the successful implementation of the General Agreement; notes that the humanitarian situation, despite the conclusion of the peace process, remains difficult because of the unstable economic situation and the serious drought which, for the first time in the last 100 years, has afflicted Tajikistan.

The draft resolution goes on to emphasize the importance of continuing humanitarian assistance as a key factor in consolidating the peace process in Tajikistan. It welcomes the establishment by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Tajikistan Office for Peace-building, calls on the Secretary-

General to continue to monitor the humanitarian situation in Tajikistan and to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session.

We express our sincere gratitude to all 45 Member States that have already become sponsors of this draft and all delegations that took part in drafting this text under the wise guidance of the Ambassador of Luxembourg, Mr. Hubert Wurth, for whose coordination efforts we are grateful.

The delegation of Tajikistan hopes that this draft resolution will be adopted by consensus.

The President: I call on the representative of Kazakhstan to introduce draft resolution A/55/L.16.

Ms. Jarbussynova (Kazakhstan): I should like to take this opportunity to introduce the draft resolution entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan", which is contained in document A/55/L.16.

I should like to announce that, since its publication, the following countries have also become sponsors of this draft: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Iceland, Malta, Monaco, Morocco, Netherlands and Poland.

As noted in the draft, the Semipalatinsk nuclear testing ground, inherited by Kazakhstan and closed in 1991, remains a matter of serious concern for the people and Government of Kazakhstan with regard to its consequences for the lives and health of the people, especially children and other vulnerable groups, as well as for the environment of the region.

It stresses the need for continuing international attention and extra efforts in solving problems with regard to the Semipalatinsk region and its population. The draft also recognizes the need to coordinate national and international efforts aimed at the rehabilitation of the health of the affected population and the environment in this region, as well as the need for know-how in minimizing and mitigating these serious problems.

The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan initiated General Assembly resolution 52/169 M of 16 December 1997, which invited the international community to contribute to the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region, and requested the Secretary-General to prepare a report in order to assist the Government in the formulation of an overall action plan.

In order to implement that resolution, in June 1998 a joint needs assessment mission was deployed, which prepared an integrated programme framework consisting of 38 priority projects in the areas of health, humanitarian aid, ecology, economy and information dissemination.

My Government is especially grateful to the World Bank, the Government of Japan and the United Kingdom and to the General Board of Global Ministries, the United States non-governmental organization, for their fruitful cooperation with Kazakhstan and encouraging support in the realization of the priority projects.

At present, the situation in the region remains complicated. The report of the Secretary-General under agenda item 20 (b) states that due to the longer-term effects of radiation, as well as the consequences of nuclear explosions, the population remains extremely vulnerable and is not in a position to meet the economic, social and ecological challenges of the ongoing transition process.

Independent experts from Japan carried out a radiological evaluation of the Semipalatinsk former nuclear-test site, and arrived at the conclusion that the present level of radiation there is 600 times above normal and is equal to that in Hiroshima after the nuclear bombing. The current situation in this region remains a matter of great concern to my Government, which is seeking moral support from the international community.

Since the adoption of the General Assembly resolutions, the international community has devoted considerable attention to the situation in the region. The Government of Kazakhstan and the United Nations country team, headed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) resident coordinator in Kazakhstan, have jointly initiated a series of consultations with the country's main international partners.

As a result of this fruitful cooperation and with the assistance of the Government of Japan, an international conference was convened in Tokyo in

September 1999. That event raised the awareness of the international community of the current situation in the region and appealed to the countries and the United Nations system for further assistance. We are grateful to the Japanese Government for organizing this conference, which was extremely important in supporting the rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region.

My Government is doing its utmost to stabilize the situation in the region, which is extremely difficult because of the consequences of the transitional period. That is why we would like the international community to share its knowledge and experience in order to contribute to the human, economic and ecological rehabilitation of the Semipalatinsk region.

In conclusion, I should like to express our deep thanks to the sponsoring countries and to other Member States for extending their full support to this draft resolution. We hope that it will be adopted by consensus.

Mr. Fonseca (Brazil): Both natural and man-made disasters continue to cause pain and suffering, whereas the resources to alleviate their consequences fall short of what is needed.

Although emergency relief after natural disasters is essential, preparedness is also crucial. International assistance is key in this regard and certainly makes a difference in mitigating damage and reducing the need for post-disaster aid and reconstruction.

If prevention plays an important part in the area of natural disasters, it has an even greater role when it comes to the so-called complex emergencies, which can be defined as situations in which human beings have their dignity abased on a large scale as a result of conflict.

Prevention has to do with the construction of solid pillars for a peaceful society through cooperation for development, poverty eradication and the strengthening of the rule of law.

Let me highlight three aspects of the United Nations humanitarian assistance that we deem essential.

The first relates to coordination. The many different humanitarian agencies must work together in a coordinated effort to provide aid. Their coordination efforts must be based on the principle of shared responsibility. Their mandates can differ in nature, but the work of all humanitarian and development agencies, as well as the main United Nations organs, are intertwined, since the overriding goal is indivisible: the full enjoyment of basic human rights. We therefore attach great importance to the contribution that can be made by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in their respective spheres of competence with a view to producing a synergy in the realm of humanitarian assistance.

The second aspect is related to the access of humanitarian personnel to those who need assistance. In several situations of armed conflict, the deliberate denial of access is a powerful weapon against the civilian population, in flagrant violation of international humanitarian law. In other cases, the denial of access is used as a way to shroud breaches of international human rights law and refugee law. Although States are responsible for providing assistance to their population, they must take into account their international obligations and facilitate the work of humanitarian personnel. States have the duty to ensure that their population receives the necessary humanitarian assistance and has the possibility to enjoy its human rights and fundamental freedoms.

The third aspect I would like to mention is the safety and security of humanitarian personnel. We are aware that the difficulty of providing aid to those in need is mounting due to a vast array of factors. One obstacle in the way of assistance stems from the very nature of most of today's conflicts. In internal conflicts, the difference between combatants and civilians is often blurred, with tragic consequences. In this context, assistance is an important asset and is in many instances unfortunately diverted by belligerents.

Needless to say, humanitarian workers bear the brunt of this sort of action. They are increasingly targeted and become victims of either deliberate or random violence. The number of 198 civilian staff killed in the service of the United Nations since 1992 is a shocking one, and yet it does not reflect the real situation on the ground. Many non-United Nations humanitarian workers were also targeted in the same period.

The report of the Secretary-General on this issue puts forward various recommendations to strengthen the United Nations security management system. We

must act promptly and provide the Secretary-General with the adequate support to change the current untenable situation. As pointed out by the High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, in her briefing to the Security Council early this month, no matter how rapidly and effectively humanitarian agencies mobilize, their response will be inadequate unless the environment in which they operate is secure.

Apart from providing United Nations staff and humanitarian personnel with adequate training, equipment and counselling, we should keep in mind the need to improve the whole security environment for humanitarian assistance. In this regard, Mrs. Ogata stressed some measures to be implemented with the cooperation of host Governments, such as assisting the judiciary, training the local police and the military, supporting the police with logistics and communication and deploying liaison officers to work as coordinators and advisors.

Gross violations of human rights and humanitarian and refugee law are at the centre of today's complex emergencies. It is important, therefore, to strengthen the advocacy efforts of the United Nations system and to exert pressure, whenever necessary, to halt such abuses and to ensure that those responsible are held accountable for their crimes. It is also fundamental that adequate legal protection be provided to everyone working in the field to alleviate the plight of the needy. It is time to launch a process with a view to widening the scope of protection under the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel.

Allow me to render homage to all those who have paid the ultimate price while trying to provide some hope for the underprivileged of the world. They are heroes, but not in the sense of being endowed with an extraordinary or inexplicable ability for sacrifice. They are the heroes of real life, citizens who believe in solidarity as a driving force in the search for durable solutions for the plagues that haunt humanity.

We must set aside the pious speeches, roll up our sleeves and get into the real business of taking concrete measures so as to give solidarity a chance. The fact that today's heroes are common people is the guarantee that we do not need extraordinary or godlike powers to do what must be done. What we need is just the political will to translate solidarity and compassion into comprehensive measures to change the grim reality that prevails in many parts of the world.

Mr. Heinbecker (Canada) (*spoke in French*): It has been two years since my delegation last spoke in this Hall on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. Since then, the world has been shaken by successive crises that have frequently made contradictory demands on the limited resources available and have sorely tested our ability to cope with such situations.

Our capacity to react effectively to these situations is of vital importance, since it has a direct and tangible effect on the lives and deaths of millions of people in need. Let us consider, for instance, the violence in East Timor, Sierra Leone, Eritrea and Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kosovo, Colombia and the Sudan; the hurricanes in Central America; the floods in Venezuela, Bangladesh and Mozambique; the drought in the Horn of Africa and large parts of Asia; and the earthquakes in Turkey and Greece. I have cited here only those crises that have dominated the headlines. It is in such terrible conditions that people frequently have their first contact with the United Nations.

At the Millennium Summit this fall, our leaders committed themselves to extending and strengthening protection for civilians in armed conflict and other complex emergency situations. We should give priority attention to meeting these objectives.

(*spoke in English*)

Last September, the Secretary-General, in a report to the Security Council subsequently transmitted to the General Assembly, made 40 recommendations for protecting civilians in armed conflict. The Security Council has identified strategies for those aspects of that report within its mandate. Security Council action is necessary, but not sufficient, if we are going to be truly successful in protecting war-affected civilians. We need the full, active and innovative engagement of this Assembly. Above all, we in this Hall need to address ourselves to the underlying causes of conflict and to help create conditions for sustainable peace and reconciliation. Humanitarian action is often independent of political engagement, but it is never an effective substitute for it.

How can the General Assembly help? The Assembly can promote human rights law, encourage respect for humanitarian law and principles and end impunity. We are already grappling with many of the most pressing questions affecting civilians: forced displacement, the impacts of conflict on children and women, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, humanitarian assistance and access, food security, good governance and democracy and sustainable development. We call on the bodies of the Assembly to integrate the Secretary-General's recommendations into their own work and to promote practical strategies for implementation at the field level.

The Secretary-General is mandated to report again in the spring on the protection of civilians to the Assembly and to the Security Council. For Canada's part, we will continue to actively promote this dimension of our human security agenda here and throughout the Organization.

It is perhaps not surprising that as civilians increasingly become targets in contemporary conflicts, those providing protection and assistance to them are also likely to find themselves under attack. In instances of armed conflict, their efforts are often seen by combatants as obstacles or as biased. The Secretary-General has eloquently noted that, regrettably, working under a United Nations flag or the Red Cross or the Red Crescent is no longer a guarantee of protection. The stark evidence is the deaths of 198 United Nations civilian staff members since 1992 — 25 this year alone. These colleagues died in the service of all of us in this room.

Collectively, this Assembly has expressed its profound concern about security incidents involving personnel of the United Nations system and other humanitarian personnel. If we continue to ask humanitarian workers to operate in dangerous environments on our behalf, we simply must do more to protect them. It is incumbent on us to follow up concretely on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. We need to give our people the proper training, provide them with enhanced United Nations security resources and ensure that assaults or physical violence are investigated and prosecuted.

Canada likewise supports the inclusion of security measures in the United Nations consolidated appeals. We need also to consider carefully the Secretary-General's recommendations with regard to the scope of legal protection under the 1994 Convention. Most United Nations humanitarian action is carried out in the absence of international peace support operations. For such operations, the 1994 Convention is applicable only if the General Assembly or the Security Council declares that an exceptional risk to United Nations and associated personnel exists. It is vital, therefore, that the Assembly take greater responsibility for monitoring situations on the ground and, where conditions merit, for acting promptly to invoke the 1994 Convention. Moreover, we urge all States that have not yet done so to sign the International Criminal Court Statute before 31 December and to proceed expeditiously to ratify and fully implement its provisions. The International Criminal Court will deter potential perpetrators.

We also call on States to apply the principles contained in the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders. The safety of the people who work on our behalf should have no political boundaries. The United Nations, to its great credit, is responding to these most serious challenges to our common humanity. Canada welcomes the progress that has been made by the United Nations system in developing more coordinated and integrated approaches to both complex emergencies and natural disasters.

We support, in particular, current efforts to improve the surge capacity, to set minimum standards for humanitarian operations and to systematize arrangements for coordination, including further strengthening the Consolidated Appeals Process. We congratulate the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). We encourage them to redouble their efforts to improve collaboration with the humanitarian community.

I would like to take this opportunity to express Canada's appreciation for the work of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Carolyn McAskie, who has dealt with multiple crises adroitly and adapted the institution to the dynamic needs of the international community, including through the management review that she conducted of OCHA. The job that she and other senior women are successfully doing here is clear evidence of the benefit of hiring and promoting competent women in this Organization.

In order to ensure that humanitarian action can be most effective and have maximum impact, we urge OCHA and its partners to strive for an even more coherent approach with political, human rights and development partners. In this regard we underscore the relevance of the Brahimi report. In order to ensure coherence among the various bodies of the United Nations system, we need to promote a sense of partnership among the General Assembly, the Secretary Council and the Economic and Social Council. The artificial boundaries between these United Nations bodies inhibit our ability to help those who need that help most.

If coherence is important within the United Nations — and it is — it is no less important among Member countries. Indeed, I believe that I am safe in saying that States are not always consistent in their interaction with United Nations bodies. Here we need to try to get our own houses in order. We must also ensure that we keep the needs of vulnerable populations very much in mind in our deliberations. In this regard, let me register my Government's regret that we were unable to reach substantive conclusions at this summer's humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council, particularly on issues of such great importance as humanitarian access, disaster response and internal displacement. As far as we are concerned, this failure in no way diminished the conclusions that had been reached previously by consensus in other bodies, nor should it be seen as an opportunity to roll back agreed language or inhibit further work. We look forward to this year's humanitarian segment and the opportunity to do better.

(*spoke in French*)

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate that my delegation is pleased with the progress that has been achieved so far to improve the overall effectiveness and coordination of humanitarian assistance in disaster or complex emergency situations. The Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator have our full support to proceed with the necessary reforms. To successfully overcome the current humanitarian challenges, we will have to be innovative, flexible and dynamic in our approach.

Ms. López (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela appreciates the efforts of the United Nations and welcomes the creation of the new mechanism, the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which reflects the achievements of the mandate of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. We recognize that with this mechanism we have a combination of prevention and assistance to vulnerable countries.

We support this effort that has been successful in bringing together the specialized agencies of the United Nations the Inter-Agency Task Force that designed the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, which is a strategy for a safer world in the twenty-first century. We hope its implementation will reduce the effects of natural disasters.

Mr. Shihab (Maldives), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The impact and recurrence of disasters deeply affects developing countries and consequently delays the integration of their economies into the world economy. Natural disasters not only cause the most regrettable losses of human life; they also damage infrastructures, particularly basic and service sectors, often destroying the main source of income and delay economic progress for a long time.

Venezuela expresses its appreciation to the international community and to governmental and non-governmental organizations for the support it received as a result of the tragedy that took our country by surprise on 17 December 1999, as reflected in resolution 54/96 K, adopted at the fifty-fourth session. Solidarity with the Government and the people of Venezuela is expressed therein.

Since then, Venezuela has strengthened efforts aimed at improving our system for managing and handling disasters. A specialized working group has been formed, under the auspices of the Ministry of Science and Technology, aimed at designing strategies to address risk management from a scientific, multidisciplinary and comprehensive platform. Factors of social vulnerability are treated as one of the fundamental aspects to be evaluated in the appraisal and zoning of risks. Our efforts are also aimed at seeking scientific and technological alternatives that allow us to implement solutions in accordance with the country's particularities, with the participation of the affected communities.

We are working comprehensively to redirect risk management processes, with a focus on preventive measures and mitigation, without diminishing the

importance of emergency management, in which the relevant State institutions play a role. From another viewpoint, we are strengthening risk-related preventive measures at all levels of decision-making and participation. The great lesson of the natural disaster of December 1999 was that an atypical climatic variation can cause extensive damage, especially when there is no system for the whole territory and particularly when the river basins are not protected.

The national Government is working closely with the private sector in this recovery and planification process. However, all the phases of recovery and reconstruction of the affected regions have not been concluded. Today, the rains continue to cause floods throughout almost the entire country, in some cases with devastating effects. Because of this, the national Government has declared a state of emergency in 11 states, where the rains have left more than 2,400 families homeless.

Part of the challenge our countries face is access to technology. As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in his message on International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction, on 11 October 2000, the methods and technologies are rarely used to help the most poor and vulnerable people, who constitute the silent majority of victims of disasters throughout the world.

Both prevention and response capability can be achieved efficiently and effectively if appropriate technology is available. Undoubtedly, it brings not only the distribution of financial resources, in some cases limited, but also the training of highly specialized human resources. In this regard, we call on the international community, particularly the countries with advanced technology for disaster prevention, to share their technology, and thus we will be able to avoid more misfortunes such as the one my country experienced.

In conclusion, we wish to express our appreciation to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for its assistance and attention to the basic needs of the most vulnerable groups, as well as for its support in the areas of food security, housing, education, health, water and sanitation.

Mr. Honningstad (Norway): Nine years ago the General Assembly initiated the discussion on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance. Since then we have seen extraordinary efforts by the United Nations system in its drive towards enhanced coordination, at all levels, in the field as well as at Headquarters. Humanitarian emergencies are increasing in scale and in number. More resources are needed to react effectively. It simply costs more to contain more human suffering and deprivation. We do not respond accordingly. Our collective effort to fulfil our obligations in this respect is out of tune with the real needs. We urgently need to reverse this trend. Two efforts seem vital to this end: sustained adequate financial commitment from donors and further improved coordination on behalf of the United Nations.

Norway therefore welcomes the report of the Secretary-General. The topics discussed are highly relevant, as are its findings and recommendations, including the outlining of the challenges calling for further work.

The enlarged membership of the United Nations Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination Team is, we believe, a positive step towards better preventive action. We are convinced that this will strengthen the development of improved mechanisms for early warning, contingency planning and preparedness. The responsibility of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee as a focal point for humanitarian coordinators is paramount. Equally important are the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's policy paper on internally displaced persons and its decision on collaborative responsibility to ensure better protection and assistance to internally displaced persons.

The extensive attention to the work aimed at better coordination of assistance when natural disasters strike is both helpful and highly relevant. Moreover, highlighting the issue of civilians in armed conflict, the imperative of safe and unimpeded access to victims and inclusive attention to gender and child issues are also pertinent.

References to legal instruments, inter alia, the International Criminal Court and the 1994 Convention on the Safety of the United Nations and Associated Personnel, are rightly given focus in this report. The report's reference to decisions made in the Security Council on various issues related to the humanitarian field reminds us of the interrelation between humanitarian issues, conflict prevention, peacekeeping, rehabilitation and longer-term sustainable development.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has made decisions that have been crucial in moving the United Nations further ahead on a wide range of issues. Many of these have had a vital impact on core activities of the Organization. Another tangible result of the recommendations of Member States and various United Nations agencies — one that is timely to mention today — is the consolidated appeals process. Over the next few days, 19 such appeals will be launched in eight cities around the world, starting here in New York tomorrow. The needs identified amount to about $2 billion for next year. This is a staggering amount. Nonetheless, this figure represents emergency life-saving assistance to more than 35 million people. Thus, the amount required is still small compared to the human suffering that can and should be avoided by meeting the requirements of the appeals. It is worth reminding ourselves that the consolidated appeals have been developed to meet a request from the Member States for the United Nations to better coordinate its humanitarian assistance efforts. This will avoid duplication and waste of scarce resources.

Norway has responded generously in mobilizing resources for the consolidated appeals. This instrument is used both as a strategic tool and as the single most important channel for Norwegian contributions to emergency humanitarian assistance. Between a fourth and a third of the total funding available for emergency assistance is provided through the consolidated appeals. Norway welcomes the efforts that are being made to include gender-related issues, questions and costs related to the security of staff, and the challenges of internal displacement in these appeals.

Still, we are faced with a paradox. While more work and inter-agency coordination are being undertaken in order to improve the consolidated appeals and make them more user-friendly, the appeals have managed to mobilize less funds over the last few years. My delegation is deeply concerned by the fact that only 55 per cent of the consolidated appeal for 2000 has been funded as of mid-November. We are convinced that Governments could make more active use of the consolidated appeals when they allocate funds for emergency assistance.

The consolidated-appeal donor meeting held in Montreux in March this year was an important step towards achieving better dialogue between donor Governments and concerned United Nations agencies. We see this process as a two-way street and believe we should continue this kind of dialogue to further enhance the consolidated appeals both as a strategic tool and as a vehicle to secure better and more predictable donor response.

Important improvements in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance have been made. But we could do more. The last nine years have been a learning process for everyone involved. The United Nations has come a long ways. Given the relentless work that is done within the humanitarian field, new and even better means of coordination will undoubtedly be established in the years to come. A particular challenge for both the United Nations and donor and recipient Governments is to better include the non-governmental organizations and local national organizations when coordinating the utilization of the scarce resources made available.

Non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to interact and play a constructive role with the United Nations coordination units at the field level. Recipient Governments must do everything in their power to facilitate emergency operations and help ensure that aid reaches those in need and that national and international humanitarian personnel can carry out their jobs in a safe environment.

Let me turn to a problem that increasingly hampers the ability of the United Nations and other humanitarian actors to provide assistance to people in need. As has been mentioned in the Secretary-General's report on the safety and security of United Nations personnel, the erosion of respect for international humanitarian law over the last years has led to the death of 198 civilian United Nations staff since 1992. The vicious, targeted and deadly attacks on staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in West Timor and Guinea recently underlines the blatant lack of respect for the security of humanitarian personnel. We appeal to all Government and non-government actors in armed conflicts to abide by international law by ensuring safe and unhindered access for the protection of and the provision of assistance to people in need.

While honouring the sacrifices of those who have given their life in the service of the United Nations, we must give a clear message that this situation is unacceptable and intolerable. There could be no better way of doing this than to act swiftly on the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's

report; to respond to the most immediate needs regarding strengthening the security and safety of United Nations system personnel, including the establishment of a full-time post of United Nations Security Coordinator; and to contribute to the security-related requirements defined in the consolidated appeals.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU). The Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union — Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Cyprus and Malta, align themselves with this statement.

It is essential to provide victims of complex emergencies and natural disasters with the assistance and relief they need. The European Union welcomes the work done by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to enhance the effectiveness and coordination of operations conducted in this context. The EU also welcomes OCHA's efforts to facilitate the transition from humanitarian emergency to reconstruction. The EU fully supports this Office and its many tasks and would like to give our assurance that we are available to continue discussions on the various aspects of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Since the subject that we are discussing today is the coordination of humanitarian and disaster-relief assistance, allow me to call attention to the people who during the past year were victims of armed conflicts or natural disasters and to the humanitarian staff who provided them aid and protection — often under very difficult circumstances and sometimes even at the risk of their own lives. Humanitarian assistance and the security of humanitarian workers cannot be separated. In fact, if sufficient security is not provided, it is impossible to provide vulnerable people with the assistance to which they are entitled.

The European Union shares the concern of the Secretary-General and of humanitarian workers regarding the deterioration of the working conditions for humanitarian staff in many situations. The EU thanks the Secretary-General for the excellent report on the security and safety of staff. He provides a clear picture of the attacks on security that have occurred, of the current system, and of the measures that could be taken to improve staff security. He recalls that in one year 21 United Nations staff members have lost their lives and stresses the fact that the crimes committed against these persons have gone unpunished in almost every case.

The European Union believes that this is an intolerable situation. We are pleased that the Statute of the International Criminal Court has defined attacks on people employed in humanitarian missions as a crime. The EU urges all States to sign and ratify this legal instrument. The EU also invites States to include from now on in their own legislation the fundamental principles contained in the Statute of the International Criminal Court and to take the necessary steps to wage an effective battle against impunity with regard to these types of crimes.

The European Union also appeals to countries that have yet to sign and ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. The EU is ready to examine recommendations by the Secretary-General on extending the scope of application of this Convention.

The European Union welcomes the efforts already made by the United Nations system, particularly those undertaken by the Security Coordinator, to resolve the problems in an appropriate manner. It notes with satisfaction that the agencies have developed effective cooperation in these areas, particularly through financing certain posts in the office of the Coordinator. It calls for this cooperation to be strengthened in the field so that teams responsible for security in risk situations are fully integrated into the United Nations contingent, thus improving their effectiveness.

Security issues have been discussed in depth within the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in particular in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. The European Union would like that Committee to continue its work, paying particular attention to the training needs of all humanitarian staff with regard to stress management and risk situations. We are pleased that the non-governmental organizations that are partners of the United Nations are participating actively in this work.

The European Union will give its full attention to the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report. It will focus in particular on all measures to strengthen the training of staff, particularly

people assigned for the first time to a difficult situation, so that they can better understand the risks involved and manage crisis situations. The European Union will also look into the financial aspects of the report. Security measures have a cost, and must be considered in the context of the regular budget so that adequate and predictable funds can be assigned.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has, over the past year, undertaken a major effort to focus on the situation of internally displaced persons, for whom the State concerned still bears primary responsibility. Such people should be able to benefit from the protection and assistance to which they are entitled, which is not always the case at present. That is why the European Union is pleased that inter-agency consultations have resulted in mutual arrangements by the agencies, within their respective mandates, to remedy the problem of insufficient coordination and enhance the effectiveness of action taken in support of internally displaced persons. We are confident that the general application of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, drafted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Deng, will be a key factor in this area. We also welcome the appointment of Mr. McNamara as special coordinator on internally displaced persons, and we are pleased that he has been able to begin his work in the field.

At its third humanitarian segment, which was held this year, the Economic and Social Council was unable, despite long negotiations, to arrive at agreed conclusions. This experience should lead us to reflect on the goals that we want to set for the humanitarian segment — whose recent establishment is linked to the reforms undertaken by the Secretary-General — and on its working methods, in particular the procedure for adopting agreed conclusions.

The European Union believes that the main purpose of the humanitarian segment is to allow countries to better understand humanitarian problems, demonstrate their common commitment to humanitarian principles and support the Secretary-General and his team in providing an effective response to and improved coordination during humanitarian crises. That is why the European Union would like the humanitarian segment to provide an opportunity for exchanges of views on the realities and difficulties of humanitarian coordination and to promote dialogue. We believe that, in order to facilitate such discussions, we should choose specific and constructive subjects.

The European Union encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to continue working, together with the main organs of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, to raise awareness and provide information with regard to humanitarian situations. It also invites the Office to develop communication with all Member States, since all countries are involved in the activities of the Office, whether as beneficiaries and donors or because they participate directly in its operations.

The European Union also encourages the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enhance its coordination with other sectors of the United Nations system and, in particular, to develop its proposal to work together with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Indeed, it is important to consider the possible consequences that the report of the Panel chaired by Mr. Brahimi might have on the coordination of humanitarian activities, as that report anticipates the implementation of integrated strategies within the framework of peacekeeping.

Through resolution 54/219, the General Assembly set out an international strategy for disaster reduction under the authority of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. Unfortunately, developments in recent years have shown that there is still a great deal to be done in this area and that, although all countries may be affected, regardless of their stage of development, it is clear that natural disasters increase the vulnerability of countries already facing economic difficulties.

Disaster reduction is an area in which international cooperation makes perfect sense, and we must try to strengthen such cooperation so as to increase the effectiveness of sustainable development and better protect natural resources, thus preventing human suffering. That is why it is important to continue activities undertaken in the context of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and to take advantage of the contacts that have been established with experts from different countries, maintaining close contact with the organizations that have replaced the national committees set up for the Decade.

The European Union believes that it is essential for the strategy to become part of the United Nations system so that we can ensure effective coordination among the various players concerned, primarily among

the competent agencies of the United Nations, but also in liaison with regional structures and qualified representatives of civil society. The Union noted that working groups on issues of major importance were set up during 2000. We hope that a new director will soon be appointed so that the strategy can be resolutely orientated towards action. Indeed, the international strategy is financed by voluntary contributions and only when something happens will donors mobilize themselves in support of the new structure.

The consolidated appeals procedure is an essential tool for the coordination of humanitarian operations and for defining complementary strategies, at the level of agency headquarters and at the field level. This process has considerable advantages: it enables agencies to define priorities and to ensure that their actions are part of a well-knit programme, particularly in the case of the transition between emergency humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction. It offers donors an overall view of needs and the responses that can be made to those needs, thereby permitting them to give appropriate support to multilateral organizations. In this regard, the decision to distinguish between security considerations and the specific needs of displaced persons in these appeals will provide donors with important information. Finally, this process is also useful for non-governmental organizations as it will avoid any duplication of effort.

The European Union is pleased to see that growing importance is given to consolidated appeals and the occasion it offers to have an exchange of views and to encourage an expanded dialogue, particularly among beneficiary and donor countries. The Union is following with interest the new initiatives for decentralization of operations for launching consolidated appeals.

The coordination of activities and response capacity, frequently in emergency situations, requires stable staffing with people who are available and well trained, as well as adequate procedures. As the main contributor to the financing of humanitarian action, the European Union believes it is not satisfactory that the operation of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs is, for the most part, not covered by the regular budget of the United Nations. The shortage of staff and financial resources have frequently meant that, when short- or long-term missions have to be carried out in the field, this Office is all too often unable to fully carry out these operations of coordination, analysis and information at Headquarters or in other countries. We would hope that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs could have a staff that would make it possible to perform these difficult missions better.

We would like to pay tribute to the Office and to all those who have been involved in this vital humanitarian work in the field. As Member States it is up to us to ensure the safety and security of this personnel. The European Union will this year, once again, be presenting a draft resolution on this subject.

Mr. Tello (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): Humanitarian assistance is one of the noblest expressions of the essential solidarity of the human spirit in the face of the challenges which, on a global scale, are presented to us by nature and by emergency situations created by the emergence and persistence of conflicts. It will always be better to prevent than to remedy. Development is, and will remain, the best deterrent to conflict and, at the same time, the best defence against the ravages of nature.

Today, when human society has the necessary resources for dealing with the most urgent needs of the population of the planet, the strengthening of international cooperation for development must be given the highest priority. This is an unavoidable challenge facing the United Nations.

By history and by conviction, Mexico has maintained that solutions to disputes must be in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Charter. Its principles cannot be made subject to interpretations dictated by momentary considerations.

Today there are no clear mandates, no definite consensus or universally accepted criteria for dealing with situations which have grave humanitarian consequences.

Mexico has firmly rejected the existence or the legitimation of a supposed right of interference, particularly when based on unilateral decisions or decisions by a small group of countries.

While the international community cannot, and must not, stand aloof from the tragedies and horrors of these humanitarian crises, action must be based on universally accepted principles and rules. A balance has to be found between the urgent need to respond

appropriately to humanitarian emergencies and the need to respect the sovereign integrity of States.

For this reason, Mexico has proposed to the President of the General Assembly that a process of consultations should be begun which will enable us to engage in collective reflection on this subject of crucial importance for States, for the world Organization and for the progressive development of international law.

Humanitarian assistance is a complex task that requires clear and definite parameters and, for that reason, Mexico supports the guiding principles laid down in resolution 46/182. That important resolution constitutes, at the same time, a plan of action and a standard of conduct for the deployment of international solidarity.

Humanitarian assistance must be provided in conformity with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. It is essential that it be granted within a framework of full respect for the sovereignty, the territorial integrity and the national unity of States, in conformity with the Charter and always in response to a request from, or with the consent of, the receiving State.

The safety of humanitarian workers is a central element in the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance. The most unstinting support for humanitarian personnel is essential. We extend our condolences to the families of those humanitarian workers who have lost their lives while doing their duty.

In recent years, on the global scale, there has been a significant increase in the impact of natural disasters in terms of the number of disasters and of those who have suffered, as well as the scale of the damage caused, with far-reaching social consequences and severe disruption to the economic development of the nations affected.

The Government of Mexico would like to reiterate its condolences and the expression of its solidarity to all countries that have had to face natural disasters, as well as its thanks to those peoples of the world who, in difficult moments, have extended their sympathy to the Mexican people.

The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and the international efforts we have undertaken to deal with the negative impacts of the El Niño meteorological phenomenon, cyclones, hurricanes, floods, earthquakes and mudslides — disasters that afflict every part of the world — have helped us forge a growing awareness and solidarity. The experience acquired by the international community has pointed to the urgent need of moving from a reactive approach to disasters to a comprehensive strategy, centred on sustainable global development, that places greater emphasis on the prevention and reduction of natural disasters. In that regard, Mexico and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean have launched ongoing technical cooperation efforts at the regional level in every aspect of natural disasters, including prevention, early warning, emergencies, mitigation, rehabilitation and reconstruction.

The United Nations is called upon to play a fundamental role in devising an integrated international strategy to cope with natural disasters that answers the what, how and who of international cooperation in dealing with natural disasters. It is in that belief that Mexico has for the second consecutive year co-sponsored the General Assembly's draft resolution on international cooperation for humanitarian assistance in natural disasters, from the emergency phase all the way through the work of reconstruction and development.

Humanitarian assistance is a shared responsibility and a collective commitment. In extending humanitarian assistance it is essential that the provisions of international law be combined with agreed frameworks of action and conduct, as well as with promoting and benefiting from solidarity among nations and peoples. This is, and will continue to be, the main thrust of Mexico's contribution to this objective of the United Nations.

Mr. Ahmad (Pakistan): We thank the Secretary-General for the comprehensive and action-oriented reports he has provided us under this agenda item.

Over the last few years, the number of situations requiring humanitarian assistance has been on the rise. The mitigation of the humanitarian consequences of complex emergencies, natural disasters and other humanitarian crises requires sustained efforts by the international community. Fortunately, there has been a proliferation of actors trying to meet the needs of people affected by those emergencies; but the coordination challenge is growing. A key to the development of an effective response to these situations can be achieved through the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance

provided through various channels. The United Nations has the mandate and the capacity to meet the enormous challenges of coordinating humanitarian assistance. Its activities in such situations are guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality, as expressed in General Assembly resolution 46/182, on strengthening the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance.

The role of the United Nations becomes pivotal in complex humanitarian emergencies. Such situations generally require a comprehensive approach. One has to not only respond to the immediate needs of the victims of a humanitarian crisis, but also to address political and development aspects of the situation. They are always the root causes. A comprehensive approach to conflict situations is essential to address the root causes of conflict. The United Nations can perform those two roles. However, it needs to be ensured that the independence and impartiality of humanitarian activities is not compromised by their association with the political process.

The United Nations can also be more effective in ensuring civilian access to areas requiring humanitarian assistance and in ensuring the security of civilians. Efforts have been made by the United Nations system to work to strengthen both legal and physical protection for civilians caught up in situations of armed conflict. A range of options can be utilized, depending on the precise circumstances, to deal with various parties to a conflict to ensure the security of civilians.

However, it becomes extremely difficult when State machinery is used to kill innocent civilians in situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation. Terrorism perpetrated by State troops, particularly against women and children, should not only be condemned, it should also be curbed and stern action should be taken. Those who violate the human rights of people living under foreign occupation should be brought to justice by the international community.

In the last decade, Africa has suffered enormously due to a number of complex humanitarian emergencies. However, the response of the international community has not been very supportive of Africa's efforts; nor have they been commensurate with the gravity of those situations. Bilateral actions have been very selective. In most cases, they have not been driven by the sole consideration of meeting the needs of the victims, but have been based on political considerations or exigencies. The needs of Africa must be met without attaching any strings to humanitarian assistance.

Unfortunately, there has been a considerable increase in the number of natural disasters occurring in various parts of the world. It is a well-known fact that the effects of such disasters can be considerably mitigated by early warning and rapid response. To develop these abilities, the developing countries must be provided access to relevant technologies and sufficient resources. The needs of small island developing States must be given special attention, as they are most vulnerable to natural disasters.

The emerging challenges in the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance in natural disasters and complex emergencies derive from the multiple sources and dimensions of civilian suffering, the growing number of actors involved in crisis response and the lack of sufficient resources to meet those challenges.

Although there has been an overall increase in the resources allocated for humanitarian assistance, the proportion of international humanitarian aid delivered through multilateral channels has declined from 45 per cent to about 25 per cent. The provision of resources through bilateral channels makes coordination of the international response more difficult. This also results in a loss of opportunities to develop the national capacities of affected countries, as most of the organizations tend to focus only on the delivery aspect of assistance and not on the long term question of development or addressing the root causes of the conflict situations.

The consolidated appeals process (CAP) provides the basic mechanism for the coordination of international responses to humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. CAP should be the overall framework for channelling humanitarian assistance from all sources. We urge the international community to channel its resources through multilateral assistance programmes.

The Secretary-General has made a useful proposal regarding the need to develop more innovative approaches in designing a CAP for the "forgotten emergencies," as the existing CAPs have failed to mobilize resources.

Pakistan is bearing an enormous burden stemming from an emergency that has been virtually

forgotten by the international community. We gave shelter more than a decade ago to over 4.5 million Afghan refugees, and today we are host to approximately 2.6 million Afghan refugees. We are being asked to keep our borders open so that we can receive more Afghan refugees. The Afghan people played a critical role in putting an end to the Cold War, but they have been denied a share in the peace dividend. We must all remember the sacrifices that the Afghan people made with their blood for the cause of the free world. Today they are being punished for those sacrifices in terms of unilateral sanctions that are being imposed on them. The world has abandoned this mass of displaced humanity. Consequently, the onus of responsibility for looking after the Afghan refugees has shifted to the Government of Pakistan. The limited resources of the Government have seriously curtailed its ability to address the needs of these refugees.

We call on the international community to respond to the appeals issued for humanitarian assistance to Afghan refugees living in Pakistan and also to take note of the efforts being made to further punish the Afghan people by imposing unilateral actions. The world owes this to the proud and valiant Afghan people. If the Afghan people had not fought the last decisive battle of the cold war, perhaps the free world would not have been as free as it is today; neither would, perhaps, the Berlin Wall have collapsed.

It is imperative to take a long-term view of the problems of underdevelopment linked with conflicts, complex emergencies and the impact of natural disasters. Economic and social development can lead to the prevention of complex emergencies and to mitigation of the consequences of natural disasters. This holistic approach is likely to help in reducing the number of such emergencies.

Mr. Kumalo (South Africa): Thank you for the opportunity that you have given us to address the General Assembly on this important issue.

We debate many issues of great importance during a General Assembly session. Few of these issues, though, have such a direct impact on the lives of millions of our fellow human beings as humanitarian assistance. Sadly, these millions now include our colleagues from the United Nations who have died in fulfilling their duties.

Article 1 of the Charter tells us that the United Nations is supposed to achieve international cooperation in order to solve international problems of a humanitarian character. I would dare to say that we, as Member States, have been able to achieve such cooperation with some measure of success. This is of little consolation, though, considering the fate that befalls many United Nations personnel tasked with implementing the agreements we reach. These staff members constantly face the prospect of being physically and psychologically harassed, violated and even murdered with impunity.

According to the Secretary General's report on this issue, 217 civilian staff members of the United Nations system have been killed in the line of duty since 1992. Worse yet, only three cases of violent death, out of 177, have been brought to justice. This situation is untenable and requires concrete action. As Member States, we need to acknowledge our obligations towards the safety and security of United Nations personnel in our countries. Where criminal or violent acts befall them, it is crucial that we ensure swift and effective action against the perpetrators.

The security and safety system for United Nations personnel also needs to be strengthened. My delegation fully supports the proposal of the Secretary-General in this regard and calls on other States to do the same.

My delegation is firmly of the opinion that we cannot expect United Nations staff members to take on difficult and dangerous assignments without proper training and equipment. This, of course, requires adequate and predictable funding, which, in our view, should come from the regular budget.

Earlier this year, Southern Africa, and particularly our neighbour Mozambique, suffered the most devastating floods in recorded history. South Africa and Zimbabwe were also not spared, but faced with huge damages and losses of our own, South Africa rendered what little assistance it could to our brothers and sisters.

What is heartwarming to us is the number of ordinary South African and Zimbabwean citizens who crossed the border to assist the people of Mozambique. Much of this would not have been possible or sustainable without the assistance of United Nations bodies such as the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance and the World Food Programme (WFP). Our gratitude goes out to them, especially the World Food Programme, whose

resources kept the rescue helicopters flying and helped save thousands of lives.

I also wish to express South Africa's appreciation to the donor community for the emergency assistance and the generous pledges made towards the reconstruction of Mozambique. Mozambique has made great strides in the past few years, which were beginning to be felt by ordinary citizens. It is important to sustain this momentum, and we strongly urge all donors to honour their pledges towards this end.

We need to learn from these and similar disasters in order to better prepare ourselves for future calamities. The southern African floods illustrated the value of using multilateral channels for emergency assistance. On the other hand, they highlighted the fact that relief agencies are acutely underfunded. While the donor community provided generously to the relief efforts in Mozambique, it took weeks to mobilize these resources. Rapid response, especially to disasters in developing countries, requires serious attention. The need for national disaster plans and management policies also became painfully evident.

All of this requires one thing, though: resources, provided through multilateral channels, to address these shortcomings in a coordinated and focused manner.

Allow me to briefly turn to the thorny issue of internally displaced persons. This year's humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council addressed this issue in part, and, as the Assembly is aware, failed to come up with any agreed conclusions. My delegation found this turn of events particularly disconcerting.

The issue of internally displaced persons is of major concern to the African region. Ten African countries alone account for over 12 million of the estimated 20 to 25 million people displaced in the world today. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has displaced some 1.3 million of its citizens and caused similar displacements in neighbouring countries.

This issue requires our urgent attention and should be thoroughly considered by Member States. We cannot continue to be satisfied with piecemeal approaches on internal displacement while millions of people in Africa and elsewhere suffer. We call on all Member States to cast aside ideological inflexibilities and commit themselves to a serious debate on this issue.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): We are considering this important item against the backdrop of humanitarian emergencies which have exceeded by far our worst expectations. We are all aware of the natural and man-made disasters and emergencies of the past year. The Secretary-General's report (A/55/82) lists some of these major tragic events. What is even more disturbing is the fact that many of those disasters occurred in the poorest regions of the world, where people earn a living under very difficult circumstances. Naturally, they have a very limited capacity to recover from these disasters.

Developments in the area of humanitarian assistance, amid an increase in the need for it, have been mixed. Although there have been some encouraging signs of progress and a greater responsiveness on the part of the international community to come forward with increased assistance, the pace has not been sustained.

The Secretary-General's report contains a number of important observations and recommendations. I will focus on a few points today.

The President returned to the Chair

First, concerning coordination, with the increase in the number of humanitarian emergencies, the number and range of organizations that are becoming involved in humanitarian response to crises are also increasing. The needs of people affected by these emergencies are increasing, too. This is giving rise to coordination challenges for an effective response to the emergencies. Greater coordination between and among those organizations is therefore a priority.

Second, the consolidated appeals process is a key tool for coordinating the international response to emergencies. Greater emphasis should be placed on this process as a continuous, year-round process of inter-agency coordination. Key components should include joint assessments, monitoring and results-based evaluation. There should also be an increased involvement of non-governmental organizations in the strategy-setting process. We believe strongly that there is a need to mainstream gender in consolidated appeals and to include gender and child-related concerns in all appeals in 2001.

Third, it had been hoped that there would be a good response to the consolidated appeal in 1999, and, indeed, some 75 per cent of the requirements were provided for. Every effort should be made to maintain the upturn in donor response. It is somewhat disquieting that by May 2000, only a quarter of this year's consolidated appeal had been responded to. By November, that number had risen to only 50 per cent. The world should increase its responsiveness to humanitarian emergencies so as not to lose the impetus behind the response already achieved. In addition, appeals that received a low response in the past year, such as in the Congo, Somalia and Tajikistan, should be given higher priority.

Fourth, we place strong emphasis on ensuring the safety of personnel who are risking their lives to help people in distress. It is important for all to ensure that humanitarian personnel have safe and unimpeded access to all people in need of assistance. We are happy that a draft resolution to that effect is being articulated now for presentation to the General Assembly.

Fifth, the role of technology in disaster preparedness and in alerting people to an impending natural disaster cannot be overemphasized. The best way to minimize the loss of human lives and to reduce the impact of a disaster is to give people sufficient warning of an impending crisis. In Bangladesh, early warning and disaster preparedness have already made a great deal of difference in the way we tackle natural calamities, particularly cyclones. We urge all donor countries and international agencies to assist the Government in preparing and upgrading its technological capacity to prevent, mitigate and mount adequate response to disasters.

We feel that the relevant United Nations agencies and departments should also strengthen their existing early warning, preventive and preparedness mechanisms. In many countries, greater engagement and active participation of United Nations country teams is of great importance in assisting disaster-prone peoples.

Sixth, the role of modern communication technologies in reaching out to people living in remote areas cannot be overestimated. There should be a close collaboration and a sharing of experiences among the Governments of disaster-prone countries, humanitarian agencies and the private sector, which are at the forefront of the information and communication technology revolution. Such partnerships have great potential for mitigating disasters.

Seventh, with respect to internally displaced persons, national Governments and local authorities should ensure their adequate protection and assistance. Necessary cooperation should be extended by all authorities to provide access to agencies of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee so that they may bring help to affected people. It should be borne in mind that the needs and requirements of internally displaced persons and their situations are similar to those of refugees and such persons should be eligible for the same degree of protection and assistance.

In recent years, there has been an extraordinary demand on the multilateral agencies in addressing humanitarian and complex emergencies. They are being called upon more often than ever before to address an increasing number of conditions. Obviously, their capacity to address these situations must also be strengthened. It is, however, noted that there has been an increase in the channelling of aid through bilateral means and a steady erosion of flows through multilateral mechanisms. Bilateral aid, of course, is an essential and vital component of international humanitarian response, but it should never erode the strength or be at the expense of multilateral mechanisms. We urge the donor countries to strengthen the capacity and role of the partner organizations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee so that they can effectively and promptly deliver required assistance to people in need.

Mr. Kobayashi (Japan): As the international community embarks on a new century, it must face the sad reality that, around the world, an increasing number of its people exist in extremely vulnerable situations, enduring a wide range of threats to their lives and dignity. Last September, at the historic Millennium Summit, heads of State and Government gathered to reflect on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. In their Millennium Declaration adopted at the conclusion of the Summit, these leaders underscored the crucial importance to the United Nations of strengthening efforts to protect the vulnerable.

Japan totally agrees that, in our efforts to realize a world where all people are free from want and fear, humanitarian assistance to those who are in greatest need in our community deserves greater attention. In

our view, in responding to the increasingly complex situation in which humanitarian assistance must be provided, it is of paramount importance that we redouble our efforts to make that assistance more effective and timely. To that end, Japan would like to stress in particular the need to strengthen the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and to reinforce the coordination of humanitarian assistance provided by different actors.

It goes without saying that effective humanitarian activities are possible only in an environment where humanitarian personnel can discharge their responsibilities without hindrance to their activities or fear for their lives. However, at the very moment that the heads of State and Government started their deliberations at the Millennium Summit on the importance of protecting the vulnerable, three United Nations staff members lost their lives in West Timor while carrying out their noble mission. For their sake and for other personnel who have sacrificed for a good cause, we must strengthen the arrangements relating to the safety and security of United Nations personnel. In this context, Japan welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the safety and security of United Nations personnel. Japan deems the report extremely useful, as it sheds light on the increasing threats to United Nations personnel, analyses existing safety and security arrangements and suggests measures that would improve them.

Japan strongly supports the initiative of the Secretary-General to strengthen our efforts to improve arrangements relating to the safety, security and protection of United Nations personnel. In our view, for these efforts to succeed, the following three points should be taken into consideration.

First, improving these arrangements should be given the highest priority. Japan has high regard for the initiative and approach of the Secretary-General, who has suggested both transitional measures to meet the most immediate needs and long-term measures that will require more detailed examination. As his report shows us, ensuring the safety and security of personnel from different organizations on the ground in a complex and rapidly changing context is a challenging task. The effectiveness of safety and security arrangements should be examined carefully but with a sense of urgency.

Secondly, as the report emphasizes, efficient and adequate training is a key factor in ensuring the safety and security of personnel. Last year, Japan contributed $1 million to the trust fund that was created to strengthen the security training of field personnel and will contribute another $1 million this year to enhance the security of field personnel. Japan hopes that other countries will join in this effort and that the United Nations will make the best use of it.

Thirdly, Japan would like to point out the importance of a legal framework for the security of humanitarian personnel. We reiterate our belief that the primary responsibility for ensuring a secure environment for humanitarian workers lies with the host country's Government. Japan, as one of the original State parties to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, urges all countries that have not yet become parties to the Convention to do so as soon as possible. Also, in order to make the provisions of this Convention applicable to humanitarian operations even before a protocol is developed to cover such personnel, Japan would like to propose that the General Assembly or Security Council routinely make declarations regarding operations to be covered when there is any reasonable concern about the degree of risk, taking into account the appropriate recommendations of the United Nations Security Coordinator.

Now I would like to turn to another important point related to ensuring the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance: the need to further strengthen the coordination of humanitarian assistance. Japan welcomes the efforts and progress made in this field in East Timor and Kosovo, for example, which are noted in the report of the Secretary-General on this theme, and commends the efforts and the work of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs made in this regard, including the launching of a consolidated appeal, which deserves greater attention from the international community.

The need to coordinate the work of humanitarian and emergency relief assistance is all the greater in the light of the increasing number of actors involved, including United Nations organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, as well as in the light of the growing complexity of the situations and differentiated needs of victims. Furthermore, in addition to the need for horizontal coordination, or synergy, between actors on the ground,

the coordination necessary for realizing a smooth continuum between humanitarian emergency assistance and assistance for reconstruction is also crucial. Japan supports the initiatives and efforts for the enhancement of coordination launched by competent United Nations organizations and other important actors and encourages them to make further efforts so that concrete results will be produced on the ground.

At the dawn of a new century, we should reaffirm our commitment to build a society in which the rights of the most vulnerable members of society are protected and in which every person can enjoy a life that is free from fear and want. In this belief, at the Millennium Summit Prime Minister Mori of Japan emphasized the importance of promoting human security by addressing the wide range of threats to the life and dignity of human beings in the twenty-first century. Japan has thus made support for the most vulnerable within the international community one of the central pillars of its international cooperation. From this point of view, Japan is determined to continue to strongly support assistance to vulnerable people everywhere and to contribute to the further strengthening of coordination of humanitarian assistance.

Ms. Narangua (Mongolia): At the outset, allow me to express my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report on the strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations and for the work that has been done by the United Nations system in the humanitarian sector. We fully support the observations and recommendations mentioned in the report.

In our era of globalization, the world, more than ever, needs better coordination among all countries in different fields of cooperation, including the area of humanitarian assistance at the national, regional and global levels. My delegation expresses deep concern at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters and emergencies over the past year, which have led to massive losses of life and damage to the economies of disaster-affected countries.

It is evident that each country has the primary role in taking care of the victims of natural disasters and other emergencies occurring on its territory. However, the magnitude and duration of many emergencies may be beyond the response capacity of many affected countries, and in those cases assistance from the international community is of great importance.

As we are all aware, humanitarian assistance is determined on the basis of the needs arising from a particular natural disaster. In the case of my country, the heavy snowstorms and the extremely cold winter of 1999 and 2000 led to the loss of nearly 3 million heads of livestock — which represents about 9 per cent of the nation's entire livestock population — and more than one fifth of the population was affected by the worst multiple disaster in Mongolia in the last 30 years.

For most of the rural population hit by this natural calamity, the raising of cattle is the main form of economic activity and source of income. But the more alarming concern is the moral wound that the nomadic families are suffering for the death of their herds. Mongolia's territory is large, and it is not easy to deliver assistance to remote localities hit by disaster. Responses to our appeal for international assistance were quite helpful, and I would like to take this opportunity to express the deep gratitude of Mongolians for the support.

Given the scope of the damage caused to the country's economy, as well as its weakness and vulnerability, it would be extremely difficult for Mongolia to cope on its own with all the negative consequences of this disaster, which will still affect us for several more years. Winter has already started in Mongolia, and the herders face the prospect of another harsh winter and spring.

The relief operations in Mongolia offer some lessons that should be taken into consideration in future work of this nature and dimension, including a need for faster reaction to appeals, faster assessment of the disaster damage and, of course, faster implementation. As we see from the report of the Secretary-General, the overall response to international appeals is still not satisfactory.

Mongolia welcomes the increasing humanitarian aid that is being delivered on a bilateral basis. At the same time, it also stresses the importance of multilateral responses in humanitarian emergencies, in support of national efforts. Humanitarian assistance is an area in which the United Nations has considerable experience. My delegation encourages enhanced cooperation among Governments, including through the United Nations and regional organizations, as well as cooperation between the United Nations system and

regional organizations. It also encourages more active participation of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in mitigating the negative consequences of natural disasters.

As natural disasters often strike countries that lack the resources to cope adequately with them, my delegation would like to stress the need for further concrete measures to reduce the vulnerability of societies to natural hazards in these countries, including disaster reduction measures as an integral part of sustainable development strategies.

It is also worthwhile to underline the importance of transferring appropriate technologies for early warning, prevention, preparedness, mitigation and response to natural disasters, which should be made available on preferential and concessional terms.

There is also a need to consider innovative mechanisms to improve the international response to natural disasters, and my delegation believes that the United Nations will continue to play an important role in the development and improvement of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. Isakov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): On the whole, the Russian delegation takes a positive view of the Secretary-General's report, "Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations" (A/55/82). We note a marked improvement in the quality of the report with regard to the amount of information, the depth of analysis, and specific recommendations. Russia attaches great importance to international cooperation in the field of emergency humanitarian assistance, in the first instance through the United Nations. We note with satisfaction the progress achieved in this area. Here we see the great merit of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), led at the present time by Ms. McAskie. We note the active and effective participation of OCHA in tackling the set of complex problems associated with humanitarian operations, including readiness preparation and early warning of imminent humanitarian crises.

There has been particular progress in priority areas of activity, such as policy-making, ensuring effective coordination of humanitarian operations and inculcating humanitarian principles in international life. At the same time, the increasing incidence of natural disasters, industrial disasters and other emergency situations, as well as the increase in the scale of human suffering and material losses, are presenting new tasks, both in terms of the increasing scope of humanitarian action and in terms of improving the instruments and machinery for mitigating and eliminating the effects of disasters.

The fundamental principles of humanitarian assistance remain unchanged: neutrality, humaneness, impartiality, the absence of political conditions, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and assistance given with the agreement of the affected country and in accordance with international law and national legislation. Without strict respect for all these principles by Member States, the development and improvement of international humanitarian cooperation would be unthinkable.

Running directly counter to these cardinal principles are the well-known ideas of so-called humanitarian intervention. The Millennium Summit again reaffirmed that this concept, which is inherently destructive to the whole system of international relations, is rejected by the overwhelming majority of the world community.

In this context, there is need for careful consideration of the outcome of the humanitarian segment of the most recent session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Among other things, the segment confirmed once again that the effectiveness of the United Nations work, inter alia in this important area, is decisively dependent on the constructive approach of the partners and on the presence of a basis for taking decisions based on consensus. We favour further enhancement of the effectiveness of the ECOSOC humanitarian segment as a key instrument for inter-governmental coordination of the work of the United Nations system in the humanitarian sector. It is important that this segment continue to function in a businesslike and constructive atmosphere, focusing on the coordination aspects of humanitarian work and avoiding politically sensitive problems; hence, the need for a careful and circumspect choice of the main theme of the segment. It is essential that it not be politicized, that it be of practical importance to most Member States and that it make it possible to draw more fully on the coordinating potential of ECOSOC.

A most important mechanism for coordinating emergency assistance in the United Nations system

continues to be the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which is drawing up useful recommendations for improving the humanitarian work of the United Nations. Information on what this organ is doing and its working methods should be known to the membership as a whole and should be published on a regular basis. An important role is being played by the inter-agency consolidated appeals process in terms of improving the strategic planning of emergency operations. We note the improvement in the structure, procedures for preparation and format of the appeals. We believe that the practice of launching these appeals simultaneously has proven useful. In this connection, we welcome the presentation of all the appeals for 2001 scheduled for tomorrow, and we call upon the donor community to actively respond to them in order to overcome chronic under-financing of individual appeals and the emergence of so-called forgotten emergencies.

While supporting the report's ideas on the need to strengthen multilateral humanitarian assistance, such assistance should not compete with bilateral assistance. Multilateral and bilateral assistance and the work of humanitarian non-governmental organizations must work complementarily and be taken into account in inter-agency appeals. There is real potential here, we believe, for increasing the coordinating functions of the United Nations.

We also need to improve the conditions in which humanitarian operations are conducted, particularly regarding maintaining access to the needy, as well as improving coordination in the field. The increasing number of threats to humanitarian personnel and attacks on personnel causes us particular concern. This has become particularly serious in recent years with the increasing number of fatalities and hostage-taking cases among United Nations civilian personnel. This is an intolerable situation.

It is imperative that the principles governing the provision of humanitarian assistance and the principles of international humanitarian law be observed by all parties to a conflict. In this connection, we think the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report on the safety and security of United Nations personnel, which are aimed at modernizing the machinery for protecting United Nations personnel, are very timely and useful.

In recent years we have witnessed an increase in the number of large-scale natural disasters. We very much appreciate the work of the United Nations in coordinating efforts to overcome their devastating effects. We regard as topical the section of the report on the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other emergency situations. However, the report confines itself to an analysis of the information, telecommunications and space technologies used in the early-warning stages and in prevention. There is, however, almost no information that would be useful to countries receiving assistance on the use of rescue technology at the recovery stage.

We are pleased that significant capacity for early warning and disaster response at the national, regional and international levels, has been developed and already works well. The United Nations, and especially OCHA, has been very active in this field. Nevertheless there remain a number of unresolved problems regarding the coordination of the operational activities of rescue services from various countries. There is no clear-cut division of labour in rescue operations. The biggest problem is the failure to make full use of specialized technologies for dealing with catastrophes. We request the Secretary-General to make recommendations on this question on the basis of an inventory to be prepared covering existing potential in this area at the international, regional and national levels. For our part, we have already submitted our own list of such technologies, which are available in Russia. We appeal to other countries with the appropriate potential in these areas to give the Secretary-General similar lists so that he can get an overall view of what is available and can establish coordination machinery for making use of these technologies globally.

We support the adoption of a draft resolution on international assistance for peace, normalcy and the rehabilitation of Tajikistan. Despite progress in the peace process and economic reform, as well as continuing international assistance, Tajikistan continues to require significant humanitarian assistance. This year the situation has been exacerbated by the drought, as well as by the growing threat of a massive influx of refugees from neighbouring Afghanistan.

We take a positive view of the international community's efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, free of discrimination, to the population of

Afghanistan. We consider it is essential to ensure safe working conditions for the humanitarian agencies and other organizations in Afghanistan.

I should like to touch upon the question of the humanitarian consequences of sanctions. To minimize the negative impact of sanctions, when a sanctions regime is being developed, consideration must be given to the impact of sanctions both on the population of the targeted country and on that of third countries. We favour humanizing sanctions and targeting them as effectively as possible. International humanitarian organizations must be removed from the effects of sanctions restrictions. Foodstuffs intended for the civilian population that have no access to food supplies, medicines and medical supplies must not come under sanctions regimes.

The fifteenth anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster will be in April next year. The scale and the long-lasting nature of the effects of the largest industrial disaster in history are such as to require serious international attention. The three countries that have suffered from this disaster — Belarus, the Russian Federation and Ukraine — therefore appeal to the United Nations to step up efforts to mobilize international assistance in order to mitigate and minimize the consequences of that disaster.

As everyone knows, notwithstanding the measures adopted by the United Nations system, the humanitarian problems in Yugoslavia remain acute. That country continues to host more than 700,000 refugees and internally displaced persons, and the overall socio-economic situation continues to worsen. The situation is particularly dire as regards the energy sector and food supplies and in the budgetary sphere.

The Russian delegation — together with 20 co-sponsors, including countries of the European Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Eastern and Central Europe, as well as other European States — has submitted to this session of the General Assembly a draft resolution on humanitarian assistance to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We express our deep appreciation to the countries that contributed to the reaching of an agreement on this draft resolution, and we are counting on their support along with that of all other Member States. This will truly promote the quick resolution of the acute humanitarian problems and support the recovery of Yugoslavia, as well as demonstrate the solidarity of the international community with the democratic transformations going on in that country.

Mr. Khare (India): At the outset, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for the reports that are under discussion today. They are comprehensive and respond to the importance that the international community attaches to the crucial issue of humanitarian assistance.

"Humanitarian" and "humanitarianism" are today much-abused words. Some actions may be fundamentally humanitarian in nature, though they have disastrous consequences for those populations for whose benefit they are undertaken. In many other cases, motivations are clearly self-serving and nefarious, though the consequences may be tinged with humanitarian benefits and thus provide ex post facto justifications to those who consistently act against the provisions of international law. We therefore share the view that the Secretary-General expressed on 20 November at the International Peace Academy (IPA) symposium — that within the United Nations the term needs to be, and is, more narrowly defined. Otherwise, a "cognition creep" that seeks to stretch the definition of "humanitarian" may debase the currency of the adjective itself.

The principle that humanitarian assistance must respect the needs and interests of those concerned seems to operate through the prism of donors. Where humanitarian assistance goes, and how much goes there, depends on the need of donors to soothe constituencies or conscience, the need of powerful international non-governmental organizations to have their egos massaged and the need of the largest media networks to punctuate soap operas with pictures of the great unwashed. These are all very real needs, but it would be good if, while deferring to these, the needs of those overwhelmed by a disaster or an emergency were also kept in mind. Our Secretary-General has often stressed that the sole criterion for humanitarian assistance should be human need. We must take immediate steps to redress the extremely uneven geographical and sectoral distribution of the limited funds provided for humanitarian assistance, which threatens to undermine the most basic principle of humanitarian assistance, namely, the provision of aid irrespective of political considerations.

It should worry us that the reports, and the discussion here, do not look closely enough at some serious issues.

First, there are problems related to uncoordinated humanitarian assistance — as, for example, medicines sent for disaster relief that are either past their date of usefulness or inappropriate for local conditions.

Secondly, there is the dilemma of how to get humanitarian assistance to populations at risk in areas where there has recently been conflict and where a United Nations peacekeeping operation is deployed. This assistance is often a bone of contention between parties to a conflict. As the Secretary-General noted in his address to the IPA symposium, "often we find that our impartial benevolence is not neutral in its effects". (*SG/SM/7632*)

Using a peacekeeping operation to deliver assistance frequently conveys the impression to one party or the other that the United Nations is taking sides. In some current peacekeeping operations, the provision of humanitarian assistance is put under a Chapter VII mandate, which flies in the face of reason. Humanitarian assistance cannot be provided, and certainly not sustained, under fire. We recognize that the choices here are agonizing, but they have to be addressed and thought through.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the increasing use in some recent emergencies of armed forces to deliver humanitarian assistance. Where the forces concerned are national or otherwise impartial, as the South African forces doing rescue missions so clearly were in Mozambique, the professional expertise they can bring to bear is useful. However, in at least two other recent instances, armed forces recently engaged in military operations in a country decided to take a high profile in the provision of humanitarian assistance to redeem their local image. The United Nations association with these enterprises tarnishes its image as an impartial humanitarian actor.

Fourthly, there is the increased reliance on the largesse of the private sector and transnational corporations, which must be monitored, lest it be driven not by local need, but by the commercial interests of the companies concerned in countries that are potential markets.

Fifthly, the platform provided by the Relief Web to disseminate information regarding natural disasters and other emergencies should not become a collection of uncorroborated news articles. Instead of trying to duplicate the functions of a news agency, it should concentrate, especially in this era of resource constraints, on information that would be useful for impartial humanitarian agencies and organizations in their work.

Our views on the report of the Secretary-General (A/55/82) are well known. However, a few points of detail deserve repetition. Paragraph 12 reports that several United Nations bodies are working to improve mechanisms for early warning and preparedness in complex humanitarian emergencies. There is no mandate for this. Particularly when resources are scarce, the funds and programmes and specialized agencies should concentrate on their main task of promoting development. We note that a donors meeting has recommended that non-governmental organizations help to set strategy. Non-governmental organizations certainly have a role to play in humanitarian assistance, but strategies must be formulated only under the leadership of the Government of the affected country. Clear distinctions must continue to be maintained between political, humanitarian and human rights components of the United Nations response. The Security Council has no role either in developing or applying international humanitarian law. We therefore do not agree with paragraphs 20 and 21, which do not accurately reflect the agreed conclusions of the 1999 Economic and Social Council humanitarian affairs segment. On the protection of civilians and children in armed conflict, we do not believe that the Security Council's resolution was helpful, or has made any difference. We agree with the thrust of paragraph 112 that Governments have the primary responsibility for the internally displaced. International action must be at the request of the Governments concerned. We do not share the opinion expressed in paragraph 118 that some Governments might not have the capacity or be willing to discharge their responsibilities. No evidence has been presented for this sweeping charge.

We hope that future reports will not be marred by drafting that carelessly ignores political realities or sensitivities, as, for example, paragraph 22, which speaks of "integrated peace operations", a concept on which no international consensus yet exists.

A new dimension to these debates is provided by the rising interventionist impulse, based on the implicit theory that all would be well were the developed

countries and non-governmental organizations in charge, and duly elected representative Governments — never mind the resolute commitment of the Millennium Declaration to promote democracy — were bypassed.

Under such circumstances, assistance cannot be divorced from the economic or political calculations of the giver, and may revive the insecurities of a bygone era. The new century should not dawn with the threat of a new North-South divide. Deep concern about humanitarian crises should not obscure the reality that actions are prone to being viewed through a political prism. It is clear that the emergence of the principle of armed intervention to redress humanitarian issues would set us on a perilous slope and would be likely to soon exhaust the capabilities of our permanently cash-starved Organization and diminish the credibility that it enjoys. We therefore fully share the views of the Secretary-General that we must "get right away from using the term 'humanitarian' to describe military operations".

All of these problems can be averted through scrupulous adherence to the guiding principles for humanitarian assistance. These, however, are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. There are also guiding principles on internally displaced persons prepared by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, which do not have intergovernmental approval. However, it is these that the United Nations system seems to find most attractive. I will not repeat the full mantra of resolution 46/182, but we do urge the United Nations system to honour it.

India has always accorded the highest importance to the provision of humanitarian assistance which fully respects the guiding principles laid down by the General Assembly. We have, despite strained resources, provided humanitarian assistance, in the spirit of South-South solidarity, to those affected by natural disasters or other humanitarian emergencies. At the same time, we have not sought humanitarian assistance, attempting to respond, within our abilities and through our own domestic efforts, to the natural disasters that befell us, in the true spirit of the guiding principles of humanitarian assistance, which clearly indicate that the primary responsibility for the initiation, coordination and provision of humanitarian assistance lies with the affected country — although, of course, we are deeply grateful for the assistance extended by others, as a true reflection and expression of human solidarity.

India places great store on state-of-the-art technologies, such as remote sensing, geographical information systems, the Global Positioning System, computer modelling and expert systems and electronic information management, in response to natural disasters. Technological advances can also play a major role in strengthening disaster prevention and preparedness capacities, and we in India are making every effort to utilize them, through the establishment of a Natural Disaster Knowledge Network, a Hazard Mapping and Vulnerability Assessment, including the preparation of a Vulnerability Atlas of India, and a Disaster Warning System. We strongly believe that the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General on science and technology, including the transfer of technology to developing countries, is one of the main issues that must be at the forefront of the international agenda.

Timely humanitarian action in many countries has been compromised by the deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers, as well as by the denial of access. I wish to convey my delegation's deep appreciation and admiration for the dedication and commitment with which many relief and assistance organizations and personnel, both within and outside the United Nations, are functioning under the most difficult and trying conditions to bring succour to those in need. The threats faced by humanitarian personnel, as well as by United Nations staff, have been clearly brought out in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/494). We are concerned that these have shown a tendency to increase, as have the threats and violence against all those protected under international humanitarian law.

We salute those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice in the promotion of our causes, and trust that such cases will become rare, and, hopefully, cease, in the years to come. However, we need to undertake serious introspection if the increasing attacks on humanitarian aid workers are the result of humanitarian assistance being perceived as biased and hence as part of the problem rather than as part of the solution. It is clear that the safety and security of humanitarian assistance will not be ensured by signing United Nations conventions or adopting resolutions of this Assembly. It can be ensured only when humanitarian assistance is perceived to be genuinely impartial and neutral and provided in accordance with the guiding principles so clearly enunciated by the General Assembly in resolution 46/182.

I would now like to refer to the agenda item on assistance to the Palestinian people. India, despite its own limitations, has been contributing to the process of assistance to the Palestinian people through scholarships and cultural exchange programmes. India provided specialized training to 41 candidates from Palestine during the period April 1999 to March 2000, bringing to a total of 200 the number of Palestinians trained in India in the past four years. All expenditure on training costs, including boarding and lodging, is borne by the Government of India. India also pledged $1 million at the Washington donor's conference in October 1995 and a further $1 million at the subsequent pledging conference in Paris in January 1996. These pledges have already been honoured through full disbursement. At the third donor's conference, held in Washington on 30 November 1998, India pledged an additional $1 million in assistance to Palestine. Of this, a sum of $300,000 has already been disbursed to Al-Azhar University in Gaza for the construction of two additional floors for its library, with the remainder being utilized for human resource development activities.

Although we will take up the item on Afghanistan later, I should like to say that the humanitarian situation there is assuming serious proportions. The majority of the Afghan people are unable to enjoy their most fundamental human rights, owing to the accumulated effects of the warfare currently being forced upon the people of Afghanistan by the Taliban and their foreign mentors; searing poverty; profound underdevelopment; and the policies and practices of the Taliban. Continuing discrimination against girls, women and religious minorities is of great concern. We demand that the Taliban authorities revoke discriminatory practices instituted by them against the minorities, in particular, the requirement that they wear on their persons special signs of identification. The forced displacement of the civilian population by the Taliban, the torching of residential houses, the burning of crops, the cutting down of fruit trees, the deliberate destruction of the sparse infrastructure, including the irrigation system, the indiscriminate aerial bombing of civilians and the denial of access not only impede the provision of relief material to thousands of internally displaced persons, but are contributing to the great misfortune caused by the drought, which continues to take a heavy toll.

We have contributed to alleviating the suffering of the Afghan people as best we can by sending humanitarian assistance. Over the past decade alone, we have provided, both bilaterally and through the United Nations system, assistance valued at more than 185.5 million rupees, in addition to organizing camps for the fitting of artificial limbs and the provision of crutches, among other measures. We hope that the constraints on humanitarian assistance that have been outlined by the Secretary-General will soon be overcome.

My statement has been rather long, but the provision of humanitarian assistance is an extremely complex and difficult task. We admire the work that has been done by the United Nations system and the dedication of the men and women, at Headquarters and the field, who bring this assistance to those in need. But both because it is so complex, and because it needs to be done right — the consequences of failure, neglect or caprice being so enormous — we have to be constantly self-critical. That is the spirit in which I have spoken.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.

United Nations A/55/PV.72

General Assembly

Fifty-fifth session

Official Records

72nd plenary meeting
Monday, 27 November 2000, 3 p.m.
New York

President Mr. Holkeri ..... (Finland)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 20 (*continued*)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

(a) Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations:

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/82, A/55/494, A/55/637)

Draft resolution (A/55/L.38)

(b) Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions:

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/55/90, A/55/92, A/55/123, A/55/124, A/55/125, A/55/212, A/55/317, A/55/319, A/55/333, A/55/347, A/55/415, A/55/416, A/55/418, A/55/620)

Draft resolutions (A/55/L.16, A/55/L.35, A/55/L.36, A/55/L.41)

(c) Assistance to the Palestinian people

Report of the Secretary-General (A/55/137)

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset of this new century, we must face the prospect of an increasing number of humanitarian emergencies in various parts of the world.

In the 1990s 4 million people lost their lives in conflicts, and every year 150,000 perish in natural disasters. It therefore falls to the international community, which we represent, to examine its ability to respond to this challenge, and the United Nations is the most appropriate intergovernmental forum for all countries providing and receiving assistance to meet and voice their own views on this question.

We are expected to review from time to time the policy guidelines for our Organization's provision of assistance, to monitor the correct use of available resources and to promote coordination among United Nations bodies and between them and other humanitarian actors in the world. It is clear that the major humanitarian emergencies of the last decade, such as those in the Horn of Africa, the Balkans, Central Africa, the Caribbean and Central America, have awakened in the general public of all countries a great desire to support international relief efforts.

At least three effects flow from this fact: first, a substantial increase in resources for international assistance, estimated at $4.5 billion for 1998 alone; secondly, a proliferation of humanitarian organizations; and, thirdly, the need to improve coordination of relief efforts.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

00-76318 (E)

I would like to present the views of my delegation in connection with coordination. In order to be brief, I will omit a reading of the sections on resources and the increase in humanitarian actors, which are in the text distributed in the Hall.

In our view, the challenge for the coordination of humanitarian assistance today does not reside in coordinating the action of organizations operationally, such as in food delivery, medical care or the provision of temporary dwellings, as important as these components may be. It lies, rather, in integrating the focus of assistance with rehabilitation programmes after conflicts or disasters as part of a long-term strategy to provide for the sustainable development of affected communities. In other words, humanitarian assistance must be more closely integrated with development aid programmes.

We are aware that various multilateral agencies and bilateral programmes have recognized this need and are exploring various options to address this situation. Mention can be made, by way of example, of the so-called Brookings process, in which the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Bank, among others, participate to expand care for refugees.

The fact is that we are living in times of recurrent emergencies as a result either of conflicts or of natural forces, and good approaches to integrate efforts have become a vital need. We appeal for humanitarian assistance to be used to create a positive environment for rehabilitation or reconciliation in affected countries, leading to long-term development after emergencies.

As for the Economic and Social Council humanitarian affairs segment, my delegation regrets that it did not reach agreed conclusions last July. We consider that we lost an opportunity to introduce new elements to guide United Nations humanitarian assistance, which, since 1991, has followed the terms set forth in resolution 46/182. We hope to resume a substantive dialogue at next year's segment in Geneva.

I would like to highlight two valuable aspects of the text of conclusions that was under negotiation.

First, there are the links between technology and natural disaster prevention and management. For countries like Colombia and, generally speaking, for the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, which are prone to the effects of earthquakes, floods, hurricanes and other destructive natural forces, technology could help improve early detection of risks and improve national and regional capacity to respond to emergencies.

In the Economic and Social Council, my delegation, speaking as interim secretariat of the Rio Group, presented the criteria guiding regional cooperation in this field.

Secondly, at the Economic and Social Council meetings we recognized the need to adopt a systematic and transparent approach to provide assistance for internally displaced persons during complex emergencies, although agreement was not reached on the terms of this kind of assistance. This approach should enable affected countries to benefit from existing capabilities within the United Nations for assisting internally displaced persons, with respect for the principles of humanitarian assistance, international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

In our view, there is a dynamic relationship between humanitarian assistance, the protection of civilians and the reconstruction of affected societies, which we must continue to explore in order to reach positive conclusions.

My country, which is a legitimately constituted democracy with extensive popular participation, is experiencing conflict with violent groups of all kinds that are intent on imposing their will by force of arms, thus creating a flow of a large number of displaced Colombians in recent years. Several United Nations organizations, as well as representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross, of friendly Governments and of non-governmental organizations, are providing support to the efforts of our own Government to cope with this humanitarian emergency.

We have presented a number of initiatives to the international community for short- and long-term actions. One of them is aimed at benefiting 58,000 displaced families during the period 2000 to 2002. Support is to be given for their early return to their places of origin, for economic stabilization in current locations or for voluntary relocation in different parts of the country. Moreover, legislation passed in 1998 to respond to this phenomenon makes it possible for internally displaced persons to form their own organizations to petition local and national authorities and utilize funds from foreign humanitarian assistance.

I would not wish to end my intervention without recognizing the humane qualities and personal merits of United Nations personnel engaged in humanitarian assistance activities in various countries around world. Their service to humanity and their actions to bring relief to thousands of innocent victims merit our admiration and acknowledgement. There are two related matters in this regard that are of concern to our delegation, namely, unrestricted access by humanitarian personnel to populations in need and the existence of a secure environment for the discharge of their duties. Colombia would like to express its firm rejection of violent acts committed anywhere in the world to prevent the basic right of any person to benefit from humanitarian assistance. Armed groups that deliberately obstruct the provision of food to defenceless populations in zones of conflict are violating clear norms of international humanitarian law. The international community as a whole should condemn that practice. Furthermore, we deeply regret the growing number of humanitarian workers who have lost their lives in recent years while performing their duties, who were confined to prisons or who disappeared under uncertain circumstances.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report on this subject contained in document A/55/494. We support his proposal for short-term budgetary measures to improve the security of personnel. We nevertheless want to express our complete disagreement over the inclusion of a Colombian citizen's name in the list contained in annex II of the report, which lists the names of civilian personnel who lost their lives in the previous year while on duty overseas. That person's connection with a technical cooperation project run by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in our country did not mean that there was a working connection with the United Nations or the Government of Colombia — a fact explicitly set out in his contract for provision of services. The attack that led to his death was widely condemned in our country, and the circumstances of that crime are currently being investigated by the judiciary authorities. Nevertheless, the inclusion of his name on the list of United Nations casualties throughout the world and the description of the incident as an attack against the personnel of the Organization were mistakes, which is why we believe the report was drafted in haste. We have therefore requested the administration of UNDP to issue a correction to that information.

We believe it is important that as many countries as possible ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. My country is currently making progress towards adherence to the Convention. We believe that the ratification of the Convention will contribute to clearly determine State responsibility vis-a-vis the various categories of United Nations personnel, as well as to harmonize national and international legislation on this question.

Allow me to conclude by saying that the humanitarian issues of our day have gained greater prominence on States' political agendas and on the agendas of international security, sustainable development, human rights and foreign policy. As a result of this fact, initiatives have been made, both inside and outside the United Nations, to enlarge the scope of humanitarian action to include not only assistance issues, but also those related to the protection for civilians and the economic rehabilitation of affected persons.

We are ready to participate in that dialogue with great humane spirit and respect for the views of other countries in a dialogue over this question and its international repercussions for all in the new century.

Mr. Krokhmal (Ukraine): Allow me to express my delegation's great appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on the agenda item under consideration. Those reports faithfully reflect the ongoing efforts of the United Nations system to address the increasing gamut of humanitarian assistance issues. We are particularly grateful for document A/55/82, which clearly identifies the challenges involved in managing complex emergency responses, while emphasizing the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural disasters and other emergencies. The activities initiated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) under the leadership of Ms. McAskie in her capacity as Emergency Relief Coordinator ad interim also deserve our full support and appreciation.

My delegation would like to stress the importance of the Secretary-General's disaster response initiatives, which he announced in his millennium report. I would like to refer specifically to the "first-on-the-ground" disaster response initiative, which is aimed at providing modern telecommunications for humanitarian relief officers in areas affected by natural disasters and emergencies.

We entirely share the conclusion made in the report contained in document A/55/82 that the international community has made progress in addressing humanitarian emergencies. At the same time, capacity to respond to the unprecedented number and size of such emergencies all over the world in recent years has been limited. The events in Kosovo, East Timor, Mozambique and other hot spots, as well as recent natural disasters in Turkey, India and other countries, underscore the need to increase the capacity of humanitarian agencies; to further strengthen preparedness to respond to emergencies; and to improve the efficiency and coordination of international humanitarian assistance. The lessons learned in responding to such emergencies call for closer cooperation among all actors providing humanitarian assistance, including Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Red Cross movement and civil society. We acknowledge the primary role of the United Nations in the coordination of international humanitarian assistance in crisis prevention and in the mitigation of the consequences of crises.

We share the view of other delegations that, in responding to conflict situations, increased emphasis should be placed on the needs of displaced persons. The number of persons displaced within their own countries is increasing dramatically, and now constitutes almost twice the figure for refugees. According to estimates of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there are some 20 to 25 million internally displaced persons in the world, the majority of whom live under precarious conditions. That crisis has affected some 20 to 25 million people in over 50 countries and in literally every region of the world.

The High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, rightly emphasized the imperative need of integrating the protection of displaced persons into a long-term strategy aimed at a lasting solution to displacement crises. To that end, a strong political commitment from all parties concerned is indispensable, including the humanitarian agencies of the United Nations. In that regard, we support the efforts to strengthen the central role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the resident humanitarian coordinator.

The plight of internally displaced persons remains one of the most serious humanitarian, human rights, political and security problems confronting the global community. The issue of assistance to them is a complex and sensitive one. It requires the development of a comprehensive normative framework. In this connection, we support the established international practice of assistance to internally displaced persons provided by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other humanitarian agencies. Ukraine also welcomes the initiatives of the United Nations Development Programme and other United Nations agencies, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Bank, to work out the new approach aimed at helping such persons resume productive lives in the areas where they reside and to provide an opportunity, through income-generating and other projects, to build skills and self-reliance, thus bridging the gap between humanitarian relief and development assistance.

However, the first obstacle that threatens to undermine the provision of humanitarian assistance is the lack of resources and, to some extent, the inappropriate allocation of available funds. In view of the increasing number of natural disasters and other emergencies, the current resources are insufficient to deal with them. While the resources available for emergency relief are generally abundant, those for long-term efforts have tended to decrease.

The international community demonstrates its generosity when it mobilizes to help victims during acute moments of humanitarian crises. At the same time, the effects of those emergencies are felt long after they have taken place. It is also essential to attract the international community's attention to reconstruction and development issues and the prevention of humanitarian catastrophes.

We believe that the international community should further realize that international cooperation in early warning and disaster mitigation needs to focus more on the early warning, preparedness and relief capacities of disaster-stricken countries. That would allow those States to prepare for possible emergencies beforehand and to respond promptly to situations when disasters strike.

The primary responsibility for the coordination and implementation of humanitarian assistance in dealing with the consequences of natural disasters lies with affected States. Therefore, an important measure for strengthening efforts in humanitarian and disaster

relief is the improvement of national capacities, especially of civil institutions, to respond to the full range and the different types of emergencies.

We believe that one of the central aspects of humanitarian assistance — staff security — has been recently integrated into the consolidated appeals process; this should be strengthened. The safety of humanitarian personnel is a precondition for carrying out effective humanitarian operations. In this regard, we call on all States to accede to the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and to implement the proposals and recommendations of the Secretary-General on the scope of the legal protection under the Convention. We believe that these actions will protect populations and help to end serious violations of international humanitarian law.

A major focus of the humanitarian segment of the Economic and Social Council this year was the harnessing of new technology to support national efforts in disaster response. Rapid advances in technology put demands on the humanitarian agencies, which have to monitor technological advances and take full advantage of the technological resources. Such innovations as the geographical information system and the Global Positioning System would help to identify emergency sites, risks and damage. Better use should also be made of communication tools to enable immediate dissemination of information and the networking of those operating in the humanitarian sector. The value of the latest achievements of information technology in the mitigation of the effects of natural or man-made disasters cannot be questioned. We share the concern of other delegations with regard to the necessity for transfers of the relevant technology to enable interested nations, in particular developing countries, to respond more effectively to disasters.

While the Economic and Social Council was unable this year to adopt an agreed set of conclusions, we think that it has made considerable progress in addressing the issue. As the President of the Council, Ambassador Wibisono, rightly underlined,

> "Recognizing the valuable activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian assistance over the past year, we must continue to fulfil our commitment to strengthen the role of the Organization in this regard. At the same time, it has become clear that the Council is increasingly committed to ensuring that the segment's guidelines are effectively implemented by the United Nations system at large."

Ukraine attaches great significance to regional cooperation in this specific area, since neighbouring countries are most often the best source of timely humanitarian assistance in emergencies. Ukraine has signed a series of international agreements and memoranda in this field with most of its neighbours, as well as with the United States, Canada, Greece and other countries. The key elements of international cooperation in my country are joint programmes with the United Nations, the European Council and European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Central European Initiative, other organizations, and the development of international bilateral contacts.

In this connection, we highly appreciate the European Coordination Programme (ECP), launched by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs at the request of a number of European States. Based on dialogue and action to facilitate the development of a sound regional policy environment, the ECP process has a major role to play in generating effective and efficient international humanitarian action in Europe. We consider the Fribourg Forum, held in June this year, an important step towards ensuring a sound regional policy environment for effective and efficient international humanitarian assistance in Europe and the Newly Independent States region. Ukraine fully supports the thrust and main objectives contained in the Fribourg Communiqué and Framework for Action.

The Government of Ukraine highly appreciates the United Nations activities aimed at fostering cooperation in the field of the elimination of the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe. We would like to pay tribute to the United Nations Chernobyl Coordinator, Ms. McAskie, and her predecessor, Mr. de Mello, who during the last two years have been multiplying their efforts to revitalize the Chernobyl-related United Nations activities, by defining a new strategy based on a better-prioritized assistance programme, increased local coordination and a more targeted approach in public information and resource mobilization. Fully understanding the concern of the international community over the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, still working almost 15 years after the catastrophe, Ukraine has taken the decision to decommission it on 15 December of this year.

In this connection, my delegation, together with Belarus and the Russian Federation, as well as the delegations of Azerbaijan, India, Moldova and Turkey, put forward a draft resolution on the agenda item under consideration to welcome this event. We call upon other delegations to support the draft resolution on the closure of the Chernobyl nuclear power plant.

In conclusion, allow me to touch upon another important issue which is also of great concern for Ukraine, namely the impact of the Kosovo conflict, which continues to cause considerable economic losses, associated above all with the extremely severe repercussions of the conflict on trade and economic relations in the region and on navigation along the Danube.

The losses resulting from the Kosovo conflict exacerbated the economic problems associated with the major financial crises of 1997-1998 and with the consequences of the protracted economic sanctions imposed on Yugoslavia since 1992. Restricted navigation along the Danube brought to a standstill the work of a number of Ukraine's shipping companies, which used to transport cargo along this important international waterway. The Ukrainian Danube Shipping Company incurred losses amounting to $110 million, and is currently losing about $300,000 a day.

The continued functioning of Ukraine's transport infrastructure on the Danube is directly dependent on the full resumption of navigation along the river. Even partial resumption will not make it possible to stabilize the situation, since the main customers of Ukrainian carriers and ports are located beyond the destroyed Yugoslav bridges, which have blocked the passage of vessels along the Danube.

Unfortunately, despite the decisions taken by the General Assembly, assistance to the affected States in their efforts to overcome the negative consequences of the recent events in the Balkans has not been sufficient. My delegation places particular emphasis on the provisions of the relevant resolution regarding economic reconstruction, development and cooperation, including economic cooperation in the region and between the region and the rest of Europe. We believe that their effective implementation would improve trade relations and promote trade, private-sector development and foreign direct investment; attract resources for financial assistance to infrastructure projects; and provide macroeconomic support for implementation of the economic reforms.

In this connection, the delegations of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, the United States of America and Ukraine have put forward for the Assembly's consideration another draft resolution on special economic assistance to the Eastern European States affected by the recent developments in the Balkans, in which the international community is called upon to continue to pay special attention to the needs of those countries.

Mr. Darwish (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The Egyptian delegation would like at the outset to express its gratitude to the Secretary-General for his reports on the various agenda items before us. Egypt believes that the time has come to consider the question of the safety and security of humanitarian personnel and that we must take a firm stance vis-à-vis all those who threaten it.

These practices have been condemned by international law as well as by the International Criminal Court, in whose Statute they are included. This represents a positive step towards ensuring the protection of the personnel concerned, which will serve to deter any persons who might wish to commit such crimes. We appeal to all parties to armed conflicts to respect the rights of humanitarian assistance workers as well as the principles of the Charter of the United Nations; the rules, traditions and culture of the host country; and the principles enshrined in resolution 46/182 of 1991.

Egypt consequently asks that humanitarian personnel be given access to the civilian population — to all the men, women and children who are in need in the various States concerned. This must be done in a legal and sound way — by giving prior consent to the organizations providing humanitarian assistance. This will make it possible for them to accomplish their mission.

The Egyptian delegation stresses that humanitarian assistance can in no way harm the territorial integrity of host States. While completely understanding the problems of certain States that do not have a central government that establishes law and order, we ask the General Assembly to set guidelines to be followed by the United Nations in such cases in a transparent way, so that all States, large and small, can participate.

Egypt followed with great interest the humanitarian segment of the thematic section of the Economic and Social Council, and notes that all States participated in the debates on natural disasters, whose harmful effects touch a large part of the world's population. We also followed the debate on displaced persons.

The debate on natural disasters commanded a consensus. Nonetheless, on the question of displaced persons, differences of opinion emerged. Different stands were taken by countries in this respect, which made it impossible to consider the question in depth.

A working group was established, under the chairmanship of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on displaced persons, but agreement could not even be reached on the meaning of the term "displaced person". Some wanted the term to include foreigners living within a certain state. We feel, however, that the term applies to citizens of a country who are forced into exodus as a result of emergency conditions. The protection of these displaced persons is the responsibility of the State concerned, and it is the role of the international community to provide assistance when the State concerned requests it. Those who live on the territory of a foreign state should enjoy the same rights as the citizens of that state. Nonetheless, those rights cannot be completely comparable to the rights of the citizens of such a state. For instance, there are some industrialized countries that do not give legal immigrants the rights that their citizens enjoy. Consequently, calling on countries that are affected by the phenomenon of displaced persons to give the same rights to those people as to their own citizens is a request that, in our view, is illogical.

In any event, last summer's discussions showed that it is preferable to consider these questions in the framework of guiding principles and not simply to take note of them in the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. Many States believe that there is no international adherence to these principles and that the Secretariat of the United Nations should therefore not hastily include them in policies of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. This led to the complications that we all witnessed last summer. In the face of this very complex situation, we take favourable note of the Under-Secretary-General's intention to continue consulting with Member States in order to include their views in these principles.

The peace process in the Middle East is now facing threats that have created a tragic situation for the Palestinian people. The international community cannot remain silent or inactive in the face of Israeli intervention and aggression against the Palestinians and the peace process. We had hoped that a page in this conflict had already been turned and that peace could be founded on the basis of relevant Security Council resolutions and of the principle of land for peace. We call on the international community to commit itself once again; to convey a clear message to Israel on the need to respect the human rights of the Palestinians; and to condemn Israel's military actions, operations and abuses, which run counter to its declared intention to work for a just and comprehensive peace.

The international community must therefore adopt a clear position and not use double standards. It would be a moral and political mistake to behave otherwise and could cost the United Nations its credibility and legitimacy in this century, which we hope to see unblemished by such errors.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Egyptian delegation, we wish sincerely to thank all the United Nations agencies that work in difficult circumstances in Palestinian territory and that contribute effectively to the capacity-building of the Palestinian Authority. I also thank the States of the European Union for their annual resolution on this subject, which is of growing importance in the current circumstances in the Middle East. On behalf of Egypt, I appeal to all donor countries to respect their commitments regarding aid to the Palestinian people as it seeks to obtain its fundamental rights, including the inalienable rights to build an independent State on its own territory and to enjoy peace and security, like all other peoples on Earth.

Mr. Huang Xueqi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): This outgoing year has been marked by a continuous growth in the number and scale of natural disasters and complex emergencies around the globe. Natural disasters have time and again wrought devastation in some of the poorest countries, leaving many people, including refugees and internally displaced persons, struggling in endless misery. New armed conflicts have broken out one after another, adding to the number of long-standing emergencies. The Chinese delegation is deeply concerned over the increase in and exacerbation of these situations. At the same time, however, we have taken note with satisfaction that the Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination Team and the Office of the Regional Coordinator for the United Nations have cooperated well with each other and achieved fruitful results.

The Chinese delegation would like to make the following statements on some of the issues mentioned in the report of the Secretary-General.

First, the Chinese delegation has always maintained that any measure undertaken by the United Nations and the international community, be it in providing humanitarian relief in situations of natural disaster and conflict or in building peace in post-relief situations, must be strictly based on the guiding principles of the United Nations Charter. The principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality must be followed in good faith and the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of countries must be respected. Relevant agencies of the United Nations and regional organizations should play a role only within their capacity and scope of responsibility. Challenging the aforementioned principles will make it difficult to achieve the expected results of humanitarian relief and will likely give rise to new humanitarian disasters.

Secondly, as the Secretary-General indicates in his report, the important role of science and technology in the mitigation and prevention of disasters should be given more attention. At the same time, however, the international community should also realize that, in implementing regional and international cooperation on the early warning and mitigation of disasters, we should give particular priority to helping disaster-afflicted countries to establish their own early warning, preparedness and disaster relief capacities so that they will be more prepared for emergencies and able to rely on their own resources to respond speedily to disasters and reduce losses. In a time beset by disasters, external assistance can play an important complementary role, but a fundamental solution has to be found in the strengthening of the capacity-building of countries concerned, as fully evidenced by experiences in many countries.

Thirdly, with respect to the issue of internally displaced persons, which has attracted wide attention this year, we believe that it is an internal affair within the borders of a country. The Government of the country concerned should bear the main responsibility for protecting and providing relief to its internally displaced persons, while the United Nations and the international community should adopt a cautious and prudent approach to this matter. The formulation and implementation of any relief assistance framework must have a prior request lodged by the country concerned and its full cooperation and participation, so as to achieve the expected results. In the implementation of the framework, international law and the domestic laws of the country concerned should be respected and the relevant provisions of the United Nations Charter and international norms strictly abided by.

The Chinese delegation would like to endorse the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that Member States commit adequate resources to humanitarian operations through multilateral channels. However, judging from the present situation, this will be no easy task. In order to ensure more expeditious and effective coordination of international responses in providing assistance, we appeal to donor countries able to do so to increase their contributions in this regard.

We also endorse the Secretary-General's proposal for encouraging cooperation between intergovernmental bodies and Member States to strengthen early warning, prevention and preparedness mechanisms for natural disasters and other emergencies. In our view, cooperation between neighbours and within a region is part of the international effort to provide humanitarian relief. There is an ancient saying in China that a good neighbour is more available than a distant relative in times of need. Such cooperation is important, particularly in early warning and emergency relief.

Finally, the Chinese delegation hopes that all sides will be able to draw useful lessons from a review of the work undertaken in the humanitarian field in the past year and to strengthen dialogue, exchange and coordination, so as to play a more important and active role in maintaining world peace and security and promoting common development.

Mr. Sun Joun-yung (Republic of Korea): Allow me to begin by expressing my delegation's appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive reports on the important agenda item that is now before us. These reports are the fruits of the ongoing efforts by the United Nations to provide better-coordinated responses to natural disasters and complex emergencies. We welcome and fully support this

campaign. In particular, my delegation appreciates the activities initiated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

Over the past year, the world has witnessed the terrifying results of increases in the number and the scale of natural disasters in many parts of the world: two earthquakes in Turkey, the worst flood in the history of Venezuela, a severe drought in the Horn of Africa, devastating flooding in Madagascar and Mozambique and a cyclone in Orissa, India. The United Nations system has made considerable progress towards developing a more holistic and strategic approach to responding to natural disasters. We feel it imperative that Member countries use the heightened national and international awareness of humanitarian principles to garner sufficient political will to sustain the progress that has been made thus far. For their part, my Government and Korean civil society provided humanitarian assistance amounting to $2.3 million and dispatched 53 rescue personnel to countries devastated by natural disasters and complex emergencies between August 1999 and August 2000.

Natural disasters are not the only perils that have become increasingly common over the past several years. As we embark on the new millennium, refugee crises and humanitarian emergencies have been erupting at a relentless pace. Internal and intraregional conflicts in many parts of the world are threatening civilian populations as never before, forcing more than 35 million civilians to become refugees and internally displaced persons. Particularly tragic is the targeting in armed conflicts of the most vulnerable members of our society: children, women and underprivileged persons. The international community, Governments and relevant parties in complex emergency situations must ensure the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons in accordance with international norms.

Technology can play an important role in reducing the suffering and damage caused by natural disasters and complex emergencies. This year the issue has already been discussed in many international forums, including the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, the Group of Eight meeting at Okinawa, Japan and the Millennium Summit. Considering the immense potential of technology in the field of natural disasters and complex emergencies, my delegation suggests that all countries make a strong effort to help each other in areas where technology can be used effectively. Moreover, we urge host Governments to help humanitarian personnel use their communications equipment and to exchange information data without bureaucratic restrictions.

Along with technology, better coordination in all phases, from prevention to early warning, of disaster preparedness and mitigation is one of the keys to improving humanitarian and disaster relief assistance. For too long, we have divided relief efforts into time-frames, long-term and short-term, as well as by function, institution, logistics and even financing. Our recent experiences in the field, however, have proved that relief efforts cannot be neatly separated into tidy packages. Knowing that phases and functions often overlap, we must now embrace an approach that is both integrated and comprehensive in order to effectively deal with the realities on the ground. Thus, short-term relief assistance and long-term development aid should be combined at the initial stages of humanitarian assistance efforts.

Let me now turn to the issue of the safety and security of aid workers. To allow aid workers to carry out their urgent tasks efficiently, effectively and, above all, safely is the most important problem for the international community to solve. Aid workers have increasingly found themselves the focus of attacks as they try courageously to alleviate suffering in conflicts that rage out of control. Since January 1992, 198 United Nations civilian staff members have been killed, and since November 1994, 240 staff members have been kidnapped or held hostage. As recently as 6 September of this year, three Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees aid workers in West Timor were killed, while world leaders were assembled at the Millennium Summit. These numbers remind us that this trend shows no sign of abating in the near future. Even more discouraging is the fact that, among 177 cases of killings and attacks, only three cases have been legally investigated.

As we enter a new millennium, we believe that the international community should no longer tolerate these deplorable developments and should take immediate and resolute steps to prevent such humanitarian tragedies, particularly to thwart violations of international humanitarian principles. In this regard, my delegation urges relevant Governments to take appropriate measures, including initiating legal investigations and combating impunity. Furthermore, this Assembly should carry out substantial discussions

on the effective protection of humanitarian assistance, including the establishment of a mechanism to find ways to extend the scope of legal protection under the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. In this regard, in response to paragraph 17 of General Assembly resolution 54/192, we take note of the fact that a separate report was issued this morning by the Secretary-General with the aim of addressing issues relating to the scope of the legal protection afforded by the 1994 Convention. We expect that this report and the suggestions therein will be considered in depth at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

Finally, I would like to state that my delegation is supportive of the idea that the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator should be strengthened both financially and structurally. We hope that the Member States will discuss in depth the proposals for strengthening the safety and security system for United Nations personnel, contained in the report in document A/55/494, during this session of the General Assembly, in particular through the Fifth Committee.

In conclusion, I would like to assure Members that my Government remains steadfast in its support for and commitment to the humanitarian assistance and protection efforts of the United Nations, and we pledge to continue contributing to this collective endeavour.

Mr. Donigi (Papua New Guinea): I have the honour to make this statement on behalf of the following Pacific Forum countries represented here at the United Nations: Australia, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Fiji Islands, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Zealand, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu and my own country, Papua New Guinea.

We welcome the comprehensive reports of the Secretary-General on this important agenda item, especially the reports concerning responses to natural disasters. It is in this context that we welcome the draft resolution contained in document A/55/L.38, which the United Nations is about to adopt, on international cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development. We thank all those delegations that have been active in the development of this draft resolution, and especially the delegation of India. The Member States of the Pacific Forum fully endorse this draft resolution.

The subregion of the Pacific is extremely vulnerable to natural disasters, which include violent tropical cyclones, El Niño, tsunamis, tidal waves, drought and bush fires to earthquakes. We have therefore always been thankful for the much-needed assistance our peoples have received from many sources, including international relief agencies, both governmental and non-governmental. Those of our countries that are within the so-called Pacific Ring of Fire are especially subjected to large earthquakes on a perennial basis. My own country witnessed such an earthquake only two weeks ago; it measured over 7 on the Richter scale. It destroyed 70 homes and a number of business structures. When an earthquake is centred deep at the bottom of the ocean, it results in tsunamis. The combination of tidal wave movements and the physical shaking and undulations of the earth's surface can result in unpredictable consequences to human lives and property. Papua New Guinea suffered only one death from the earthquake and a small tsunami that followed.

It is therefore especially important that the scientific knowledge that has been gained over time and the new technologies for predicting and measuring the causes and effects of natural disasters be made available to all peoples of the world. Technologies for determining the appropriate building structures for earthquake- and tsunami-prone areas must be made known to the people susceptible to these phenomena. Information dissemination is therefore very important.

We acknowledge that following the earthquake in Papua New Guinea two weeks ago, the early warning systems appear to have been immediately put into place, with a "tsunami watch" posted to a number of other Pacific countries. This is a welcome development. We thank all United Nations, governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in coordination and delivery of this early warning advice.

The economies of many small island nations are extremely vulnerable to these natural disasters. It was in this light that the South Pacific Applied Geoscience Commission (SOPAC) began work on the development of an environmental vulnerability index. Last week, the SOPAC technical analyst was in the Caribbean country of Saint Lucia, collecting data for input into the economic models being developed. We are hoping for further collaboration from other island nations such as Maldives and Singapore. SOPAC hopes to submit its work to the Economic and Social Council's Committee for Development Policy by March next year. We are

grateful to those Governments that have contributed financially to the studies being undertaken by SOPAC.

We note in particular that paragraph 12 of the draft resolution stresses the need for specialized companies to promote the use of technologies to strengthen preparedness and response to natural disasters. In the field of natural disasters, we cannot exclude the involvement of the private sector. The only qualifier should be that technologies developed must be made available at minimal costs to those affected by natural disasters. We therefore call on all States to cooperate in the development and the transfer to affected countries of appropriate technologies in this field. Like last year, we again welcome the space-based technologies for the prevention, mitigation and management of natural disasters in vulnerable societies. In this respect, we again repeat our collective appreciation to those countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations that have continually provided assistance to the Pacific Island nations, especially Australia, the European Union, Japan, New Zealand, the United States, and the United Nations Development Programme as the implementing agency for the Pacific region.

Last year we agreed that the Central Emergency Revolving Fund and other appropriate contingency funds should be enhanced and more actively used for timely response. This year, we support a request to the Secretary-General, as contained in resolution 54/95 and resolution 54/233, to submit to the General Assembly concrete proposals in order to enhance the functioning and utilization of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. In this regard, we support a request to the Secretary-General to consider a more active use of this fund for timely and adequate natural disaster response. Innovative mechanisms to improve international response to natural disasters and other emergencies should also be considered.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, the delegation of Argentina wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his reports on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/55/82), safety and security of United Nations personnel (A/55/494) and the scope of legal protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel (A/55/637).

The magnitude of natural disasters, as well as of various internal or international conflicts, continues to subject entire populations to harsh humanitarian emergency conditions. In confronting these situations, the United Nations continues to redouble its efforts to bring its support to those needy populations. The Republic of Argentina wishes to express its appreciation for the work of the Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the various agencies and bodies of the system with competence in the field under the guidance of the principles established in resolution 46/182.

It is my delegation's understanding that the implementation of those actions requires coordinated action on the part of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council in order to address, within their respective areas of competence, the various humanitarian aspects. In that context, we regret that the Economic and Social Council humanitarian segment was not able this year to reach agreed conclusions by consensus.

In the face of the major challenges posed by current humanitarian emergencies, it is our understanding that it is up to the Member States to adopt measures to provide political and logistic support so as to better meet the needs for assistance. Within the range of measures that States should adopt in this field, my delegation wishes to make specific reference to the situation of humanitarian personnel. The conflicts and complex emergency situations of the past decade reveal that there are now means of waging war that routinely involve attacks on civilian populations, cutting off supplies of food and medicines to these populations and deliberate attacks on humanitarian personnel.

The Republic of Argentina forcefully condemns killings, actions against physical integrity, rape and other sexual attacks, robberies and all manner of acts of physical and psychological violence to which humanitarian personnel are subjected in the selfless fulfilment of their tasks. At the same time, we would like once again to convey our condolences to the families and friends of the victims who, unfortunately, have joined the long list of those whose concern for their fellow human beings has been taken to the extreme of giving their own lives in the service of others. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs of my country indicated in February of this year, during the Security Council debate on the safety and security of

United Nations personnel, associated personnel and humanitarian personnel:

> "Those who work tirelessly, giving all their effort, their solidarity or their lives to alleviate the suffering of their fellow human beings, deserve our deepest appreciation, our gratitude and our commitment to do our utmost to defend them. These individuals set an example for all of us." *(S/PV.4100, p. 23)*

In calling for a debate on this item during its Security Council presidency, the Republic of Argentina wanted to sound an alarm regarding the grave dangers confronting these personnel, to draw attention to the need to adopt the necessary measures to protect them, to pay them a well-deserved tribute and to express some of the gratitude that the United Nations and the Member States owe them.

It is my country's understanding that the responsibility for the security and protection of humanitarian personnel — including the creation of an appropriate environment in which they can do their work — rests with the Government that receives the humanitarian mission. At the same time, we consider it essential that humanitarian personnel be provided safe and unrestricted access to the affected zones so that they can perform their task of assisting civilian populations in need, including refugees and internally displaced persons. We urge all States to ensure that any act or threat of violence against humanitarian personnel committed on their territory is appropriately investigated and that appropriate measures are taken to prosecute and punish the aggressors.

Likewise, we urge that the status of humanitarian personnel and their rights in case of detention be strictly respected. This should include the provision of medical assistance when necessary.

The Republic of Argentina agrees that there is an immediate need to implement the measures regarding the appointment and training of personnel that were suggested by the Secretary-General in his report on the security of United Nations personnel. We also support the temporary budgetary measures suggested in that document that are aimed at responding to the most urgent needs in order to strengthen the security of United Nations personnel during the biennium 2000-2001. At the same time, we pledge to give due consideration to any proposals that the Secretary-General may put forward to establish a stable financial structure for the security of United Nations personnel as of the biennium 2002-2003.

Furthermore, my country believes it is crucial to strengthen the legal system of protection for humanitarian personnel. To that end, we urge States that have not yet done so to ratify the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, as well as the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. We consider it noteworthy progress that attacks against humanitarian personnel have been made part of the jurisdiction of that high tribunal. Argentina has ratified the first of the aforementioned legal instruments and will soon move to ratify the second.

Lastly, we attach great importance to the report submitted by the Secretary-General on the scope of legal protection provided under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. We are prepared to give the subject the careful consideration it deserves, so that different categories of humanitarian personnel will receive proper legal protection.

Mr. Bakoniarivo (Madagascar) (*spoke in French*): In resolution 54/96 M, adopted on 14 March last, the General Assembly expressed its grave concern about the extensive damage and devastation caused by the tropical cyclones Eline and Gloria and the floods that struck Madagascar. It requested States and international organizations to provide additional emergency support to Madagascar with a view to alleviating the economic and financial burden borne by the people of Madagascar during the emergency period and in the subsequent process of rehabilitation.

The members of the international community, through bilateral and multilateral bodies, responded favourably to that appeal, making significant contributions to relief and reconstruction activities in the affected areas. The mobilization of international aid made possible the rapid delivery and secure distribution of food and non-food emergency assistance, as well as the partial rehabilitation of damaged infrastructure.

I should like to stress that during the 2000 cyclone season, three cyclones struck Madagascar within a period of six weeks. In addition to the cyclones Eline and Gloria, which struck on 17 February and 2 March 2000 respectively, and which led to the adoption of resolution 54/96 M, a third cyclone,

Hudah, which was more powerful than the two that preceded it, hit Madagascar on 2 April 2000, destroying 80 per cent of one area of export crops on which the economy of Madagascar largely depends. These three cyclones left 291 people dead and seriously affected 1,106,208 people in 70 villages.

Despite the precariousness and vulnerability of its economic situation, the Government of Madagascar has made the necessary efforts to provide relief for the suffering of the victims of these cyclones and carry out urgent reconstruction work. However, in the light of the very high cost of rehabilitation, estimated at $108 million, these efforts will be insufficient without the assistance of the international community, which is invaluable in overcoming the serious humanitarian and material consequences of natural disasters.

I should therefore like to express once again the heartfelt thanks and profound appreciation of the Government of Madagascar to all States, organs and bodies of the United Nations and international financial institutions, as well as the non-governmental organizations that have provided assistance in support of the rescue, recovery and reconstruction operations and programmes undertaken by the Government of Madagascar.

In this context, we would also like to pay a well-deserved tribute to the diligent and effective actions of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, at New York and Geneva Headquarters and in the field, as well as the greatly appreciated action of the Resident Coordinator in mobilizing international assistance. We should also like to reiterate our gratitude to the Secretary-General, who made the international community aware of these disasters from the very beginning. We also take this opportunity to express to him our gratitude for his report in document A/55/124 on assistance to Madagascar following the tropical cyclones.

We are convinced that international solidarity remains the most effective weapon for coping with the unpredictable nature of natural disasters, as the expertise and technology to master them has not yet been developed. This conviction, and the objectives that Madagascar shares with the other Members of our Organization, give us confidence that Madagascar will continue to benefit from the spirit of international solidarity in carrying out its onerous task of recovery, as was so well emphasized by the Secretary-General in his report, as well as in the quest for sustainable development for the well-being of the people of Madagascar.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.35 p.m.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I wish at the outset, on behalf of my delegation, to express my sincere thanks and high appreciation to the Secretary-General, His Excellency Mr. Kofi Annan, for his report contained in document A/55/137. My profound thanks go also to Mr. Terje Roed Larsen, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority.

For more than two months now, the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, have been the site of ongoing aggression by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people. Among the victims have been more than 230 Palestinian martyrs and more than 10,000 injured, most of them permanently maimed, which will prevent them forever from resuming a normal life. More than a third of the victims have been children under the age of 18. In addition to all the deaths and injuries, many public and private buildings have been bombed and destroyed by the Israeli forces of occupation; those forces have uprooted fruit trees, have deliberately attacked the infrastructure and have destroyed roads linking Palestinian towns and villages. They have destroyed electric power plants and radio and television stations.

Likewise, the forces of occupation have imposed a total internal blockade on the movement of people and goods between Palestinian towns and villages and the outside world. This has paralysed the Palestinian economy and has led to severe shortages of goods and fuel; reports indicate that in the Gaza area famine is imminent. The strict blockade has given rise to the destruction of the Palestinian economy and to a drop in production, causing a decline to less than 20 per cent of earlier economic activity. Unemployment in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip stands at more than 45 per cent, and more than 1.3 million Palestinians are living below the poverty line, on less than a dollar and a half a day. Similarly, the total material losses are greater than $900 million, far exceeding donor-country subsidies to the Palestinian people. That is not to

mention a complete halt to development projects and infrastructure development programmes.

The Special Coordinator has reported that material losses to the Palestinians are a result of Israel's use of heavy weapons, including rockets, against many buildings, vehicles and fruit orchards. His report indicates also that Israeli settlers have joined in the destruction of private property, such as Gaza-based trucks privately owned by Palestinians, which transport goods to and from Gaza and which were waiting at Israeli checkpoints. It also speaks of vast losses in the public sector in the health and social welfare sphere; the Palestinian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare now has a great burden to bear.

Here we would like to express our gratitude to our brothers from the Arab States who have received a number of seriously injured individuals and provided medication and medical assistance on an emergency basis. We would also like to thank and express our appreciation to the donor countries and to the non-governmental organizations that have provided humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people. We also reaffirm the urgent need for donor countries and the United Nations and its agencies to provide emergency assistance to the Palestinian people besieged by the Israeli occupation forces.

It is clear that the reasons for this crisis are the continuation of the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, including East Jerusalem, the continuation of the policy of expanding settlements, the non-implementation of agreements, the profanation of holy Christian and Muslim sites and the non-implementation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

For this reason, the establishment of just and comprehensive peace and of security and stability in the whole region requires an end to the Israeli occupation, a withdrawal from all the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, as well as from the occupied Syrian Golan, recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and to the establishment of their own independent State, and total sovereignty over their territory. Without achieving this, there will never be progress in the peace process and we will never be able to speak of regional development or of regional cooperation with Israel, the occupying Power.

In conclusion, we wish to reaffirm the important role of the United Nations in the implementation of a just and comprehensive peace based on the permanent responsibility of the United Nations regarding the question of Palestine, the importance of its assistance to the Palestinian people and the importance of the role played by the Special Coordinator and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now give the floor to Ms. Astrid Heiberg, President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Ms. Heiberg (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is pleased to have this opportunity to address the General Assembly on matters that are of deep concern to us, as they are to the entire humanitarian community.

Improving the ways we work together is central to the interests of the victims and the vulnerable whom we serve, vital to retaining the respect and loyalty of our volunteers and crucial in building the confidence of Governments in our ability to do the work we are there to do.

The issue of the coordination of humanitarian assistance has been debated in the General Assembly every year since the early 90s. This reflects the inherent difficulties in achieving the appropriate level of coordination. It may also reflect that talking in general terms about the need for coordination does not bring us forward. We need to be specific about what kind of coordination we want, and what we do not want. Unless carefully designed, coordination in the form of centralizing bodies can actually be counterproductive to locally based action and responsibility, upon which our Red Cross and Red Crescent network is based. Coordination done wrongly can create new layers of bureaucracy where there is a need to reduce existing bureaucracies. This being said, all players in the humanitarian, political and development spheres must manage crisis in a comprehensive manner, taking due account of the respective responsibilities, mandates and spheres of competence of each party.

An important tool for better coordinated management of humanitarian crises is the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red

Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief. This work is taken further in the Sphere Project, with the humanitarian charter and minimum standards in disaster response. It sets out standards for humanitarian assistance against which humanitarian organizations can be held accountable. Governments should also take responsibility for implementing such standards, possibly through codes of conduct of their own. Compliance with the Code of Conduct could also be secured if donors use these as a criterion for funding. This would also lead to better coordination.

Last year the call for improved coordination and better-quality assistance came through strongly at the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, of which States parties to the Geneva Conventions are part. The plan of action adopted at that Conference included a commitment from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement to improve our coordination and cooperation in our international activities, both internally and with States, the United Nations system and other actors, based upon the Code of Conduct; and support from both States and the Movement for efforts to develop minimum practical standards for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, such as those elaborated in the Sphere Project.

While much has been done to achieve better quality and coordination, we are facing major challenges, one of which is the lack of a systematic legal framework for disaster response, which may cause unnecessary difficulties in responding to disasters. Some elements of such a framework already exist, including United Nations resolutions, conventions, such as for the use of radio communication, as well as customary law. This constitutes the beginnings of what I like to refer to as an international disaster response law.

The need for such a legal framework was discussed in our *World Disasters Report* this year, including some basic concepts and possibilities to cover those gaps by developing so-called international disaster response law. Based on the Federation and our National Societies' experiences in the field, we have initiated consultations on these issues with other interested parties. This work cannot be done by us alone. We therefore invite the United Nations and its individual Member States, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations, to participate actively in this work.

The humanitarian community is rightly concerned with the plight of the internally displaced, including not only those displaced by armed conflict, but also those displaced by natural and man-made disasters, the side effects of development projects and those forced to move into already overcrowded cities because of fear that they are unable to provide for themselves.

Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies are well placed to assist in these activities. If appropriately supported we can provide preparedness and early warning in the first phase, because we are part of the community and have a network of branches throughout the country; can provide response in the first emergency phase, particularly where access is a problem for the international community; can supplement actions and mandates of other organizations in the care and maintenance phase and in the solution phase; and, not least, National Societies, as local organizations, can enable integration to work in the final integration phase. Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that States have the primary responsibility for the protection of all people within their borders. Organizations like the Red Cross and Red Crescent are there to assist States in discharging that responsibility.

The General Assembly has before it the report of the Secretary-General on the subject of security for humanitarian workers. We highly appreciate the work of the United Nations in this regard, not least because we, too, face the problem of maintaining a presence in situations of instability and violence. We are nevertheless worried by the almost exclusive focus on the situation of international staff of international organizations. We do understand the reasons for that: organizations have concerns for their staff, Governments for their citizens and media for their home audiences. But that is no excuse for ignoring the situation of locally recruited staff, volunteers and staff of our counterpart organizations at the national level. These humanitarian workers — who are there before, during and after a crisis — suffer many more casualties than do international staff, and with more severe consequences for their families and dependants. Moreover, they often face danger as a direct consequence of our international actions, policies and statements — matters on which they have little influence. On behalf of, especially, the volunteers who will be the subject of United Nations celebrations over the next year, I call upon both States and agencies to pay full attention to those humanitarian workers who

put their security at stake to enable international agencies to carry out our tasks.

Ensuring effective and efficient coordination is our collective duty, and if it fails, we have failed. We need to continue to build the institutional framework within which coordination can take place and to develop the needed legal instruments. But our focus must be on the people we serve — the internally displaced, the victims of natural disasters and the individuals and families fleeing war and strife. They must get the assistance, support and protection they need.

In that context, and with the permission of the President, let me take this opportunity to advertise one of tomorrow's events, namely, the occasion on which we inaugurate the International Year of Volunteers. Let us recall that while we agencies, States and international organizations see ourselves as significant players, the first and most important emergency response — the immediate, life-saving action — is provided by family, relatives, friends and neighbours: in short, by volunteers.

Let me end by restating the commitment of the International Federation to constructive participation in the coordination of humanitarian assistance. I assure the General Assembly of our willingness to engage and cooperate.

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/6, of 16 October 1990, I now call on the observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Paclisanu (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) welcomes this renewed opportunity to share its views in the General Assembly on the subject of humanitarian coordination.

In essence, the situation of victims of conflict has hardly changed for the better. In many instances it has deteriorated further in the past year. As a humanitarian organization active principally in situations of armed conflict and internal violence, the ICRC is appalled by the continuing suffering inflicted on civilians, including women and children, in flagrant violation of the most basic principles of international humanitarian law. In too many ongoing conflicts civilians are increasingly being targeted, killed, wounded, uprooted and separated from their families. They are denied basic resources and are seeing their survival and dignity threatened.

That, in turn, entails several humanitarian consequences of major proportions. It triggers the displacement of large numbers of persons within and across boundaries. Children find themselves forcibly conscripted, their lives often destroyed. Women bear the brunt of sexual assault and the tragedy of widowhood. To make matters worse, the proliferation of persons carrying arms has aggravated violence and insecurity. Humanitarian action has itself become a dangerous business to carry out in many contexts.

As a direct consequence of this, humanitarian needs in terms of both assistance and protection have not only increased in a spectacular fashion, but they have also become more and more difficult to adequately address. That leaves far too many people to their fate, unassisted and unprotected. In parallel, the overall humanitarian response has itself become highly complex due, among other reasons, to the large number of actors, imprecise mandates and difficulties in achieving effective coordination. Such obstacles are at times compounded by a lack of commonly agreed principles of action.

The International Committee therefore strongly believes that the strengthening of humanitarian coordination is of paramount importance, both in order to better respond to the needs of victims and to render the deployment of humanitarian action safer. To that end, it is crucial to ensure that the nature, principles and goals of strictly humanitarian action are well understood, and therefore accepted by all parties involved. In that context, the ICRC can never tire of repeating that political action has to be kept distinct from humanitarian operations. In its view, an emergency situation warrants two types of responses. One is the search for a stable political settlement; the other, distinct response is the alleviation of the humanitarian consequences of conflicts.

Of course, such a statement does not amount to a denial of the evident interrelations that exist between humanitarian crises and the political, military and economic factors involved in them. Rather, it is a recognition of the fact that, however well intended, a confusion of these two responses is likely to produce de facto biases in the provision of assistance and protection. This may compromise the neutrality of a strictly humanitarian endeavour in the eyes of warring

parties, and as a consequence jeopardize its very security. Ultimately, this may well increase the number of civilians beyond the reach of the aid community.

Bearing those considerations in mind, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement has undertaken steps — in particular through the Sevilla Agreement — in order to harmonize coordination within the Movement itself, and between the respective mandates of its components, namely, the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, their International Federation and the ICRC. In conflict situations it is incumbent upon the International Committee of the Red Cross to coordinate the efforts of the Movement. Such coordination could simply not have been possible without the invaluable support of National Societies, which play a vital role in the strengthening of local coping mechanisms.

Furthermore, in a number of contexts, the ICRC relies heavily, sometimes exclusively, on the personnel of the National Societies, working in very difficult and precarious situations. It therefore wishes to express its profound gratitude and sincere admiration to them.

Finally, within the framework of its field activities, the ICRC increasingly involves National Societies of third countries which show an interest in its operations.

The ICRC reiterates its full commitment to achieving the greatest possible complementarity with other humanitarian actors. In this spirit, and in its capacity as a standing invitee, it substantially contributes in the various meetings of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and its subsidiary bodies, be they on thematic or operational issues. In the field, it cooperates with the United Nations-led inter-agency coordination efforts and supports ad hoc arrangements designed to take into account rapidly changing circumstances. One very recent example of this approach is its interaction, within the limits of its mandate, with the senior inter-agency network on internal displacement, both at Headquarters and in the field. Another example is the ICRC's contribution to the IASC Sub-Working Group on Gender and Humanitarian Response on the theme of women and war. A third, in relation to children in armed conflict, is the joint United Nations Children's Fund/ICRC 1999 publication of an educational module regarding the use of child soldiers and the implementation of international law.

In parallel, the ICRC pursues a sustained bilateral dialogue with a range of United Nations agencies and bodies, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well as with concerned non-governmental organizations, the fundamental objective of which is to determine the modalities of improved humanitarian cooperation in the field. In this context, the International Committee also wishes to mention its regular relations with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The rationale behind such exchanges stems from the complementarity of our organizations, which, acting on the basis of our respective mandates and working methods, strive to safeguard human dignity.

Another area in which the ICRC's approach has evolved is in the enhancement of complementarity and coordination in the transition from emergency relief to rehabilitation and, ultimately, development. The focus of its emergency relief operations is increasingly oriented towards rehabilitation, taking into account the capacities and roles of the civilians themselves, of the National Societies, of the authorities of the countries concerned and of organizations such as the World Bank.

In conclusion, the ICRC wishes to emphasize that appropriate and enhanced coordination is more necessary than ever. At the same time, it is also firmly determined to effectively fulfil its special role as an independent and neutral intermediary in situations of armed conflict, as enshrined in the Geneva Conventions, and to gain access to all victims, wherever they may be.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken at the 71st plenary meeting, this morning, I now call on the observer of Switzerland.

Mr. Helg (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like sincerely to thank the acting Emergency Relief Coordinator and all the personnel of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) for the excellent work done last year.

In the year 2000, OCHA and the international humanitarian community have once again dealt with a considerable number of challenges in carrying out their shared responsibility in rendering humanitarian assistance.

Allow me to dwell more specifically on some of these challenges. It is the duty of the international

community to protect and to come to the assistance of those in need, be they the victims of armed conflict or of natural disasters. It is in the name of that collective responsibility that there is a need once again to reaffirm the major principles governing international humanitarian action — independence, neutrality and impartiality — as well as the duty to ensure unrestricted access to aid for victims and to guarantee the security of the humanitarian actors. Non-respect for these principles that have been endorsed by the international community cannot be tolerated when what is at stake is the life of individuals and of groups of peoples, such as internally displaced persons or those living in refugee camps. The protection of these categories of individuals is essential, since they are the most vulnerable to acts of aggression carried out by armed elements.

It is important that the States of both the North and the South speak as one to defend these principles, for without respect for them no humanitarian action is possible. Moreover, the physical elimination of men and women dedicated to the humanitarian cause underscores in particularly brutal fashion the issue of security, be it that of civilian populations or that of humanitarian players. The State on whose territory such acts are committed bears the primary responsibility, in particular when it allows the action of armed bands against defenceless individuals.

However, the international community, and the United Nations in particular, are also responsible for the humanitarian personnel in their employ. It is urgent that the United Nations be given additional means to ensure the security of the humanitarian actors, as well as that of the victims of conflict. Switzerland would like to voice to the Secretary-General its full support for the measures he has proposed in this context.

The last meeting of the Economic and Social Council showed that real difficulties exist in the area of humanitarian action. These difficulties relate both to politics and specifically to humanitarian action. Switzerland has been following these difficulties with ever-growing concern, and they prompt us to raise questions of principle — questions calling for answers that by definition are difficult — and to reflect on the concept of the humanitarian segment. We continue to believe that this segment remains an important forum for humanitarian dialogue and must therefore be strengthened.

But it seems to us that the usefulness of agreed conclusions must be carefully reconsidered in the future. In other words, greater attention should be paid to the question of the relationship between efforts and results. The implementation of the Brahimi report is another aspect of the present political discussion with which the humanitarian community must seriously deal. It is quite natural that this report focuses on future concepts of peacekeeping operations. However, it should not be forgotten that such operations are set up on territory already occupied by development or humanitarian agencies. Therefore, there is a need to consider in a new light, and to analyse, dissonance between political, military and humanitarian questions.

Sensitive situations may arise in the relationship between peacekeeping operations and humanitarian operations. What happens to humanitarian actors when a peacekeeping operation withdraws for whatever reason — for instance, because of inadequate security? How should cooperation between humanitarian activities and peacekeeping be formulated?

Switzerland is gratified to note that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Assistance has announced that it intends to devote particular attention to questions of this kind in the upcoming discussions on the implementation of the Brahimi report. Switzerland supports this new approach, which falls directly within the main purview of OCHA.

In conclusion, I should like to touch on the internal organization of OCHA. Switzerland has been following with interest the administrative reform under way. As we see it, this process, though useful, should not fail to take into account the need for stability, because this kind of refocusing usually creates considerable insecurity among staff.

We have noted with satisfaction the efforts currently under way to define a doctrine that is applicable in New York, Geneva and in the field, as well as in the area of natural disasters and complex emergency situations. We cannot but support such an initiative and are convinced that OCHA's achievements will largely depend on it.

Finally, Switzerland takes note of the progress made by the United Nations towards establishing a system of coordination of humanitarian activities which meets the criteria of efficiency and consistency. It encourages OCHA and the humanitarian agencies to

pursue such work and urges States to become actively involved in this process.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.16, entitled "International cooperation and coordination for the human and ecological rehabilitation and economic development of the Semipalatinsk region of Kazakhstan".

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt the draft resolution?

Draft resolution A/55/L.16 was adopted (resolution 55/44).

The President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolution A/55/L.41, entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and rehabilitation of Tajikistan".

I should like to announce that, since the publication of the draft resolution, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/55/L.41: Croatia, Morocco and Slovenia.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/55/L.41?

Draft resolution A/55/L.41 was adopted (resolution 55/45).

The President: I should like to inform members that action on draft resolutions A/55/L.35, A/55/L.36 and A/55/L.38 will be taken at a later date, and that further draft resolutions on this item will be submitted also at a later date.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): It is indeed a shame that in this debate, on a subject which enjoys universal support — assistance to the Palestinian people — a worthy issue is being abused as a platform for unfounded accusations against my country.

It is most unfortunate that the Palestinian Observer has chosen to politicize this issue and thereby distract the attention and energy of the Assembly from achieving the common goal of improving the well-being of the Palestinian population.

Israel deeply regrets the suffering that has come to Palestinian society as a whole as a result of the deliberate decision of the Palestinian leadership to pursue violence rather than negotiation. We have repeatedly made clear that our objective is a negotiated peace settlement that will bring calm and security to all the peoples of the region. Israel was pursuing such a settlement in good faith and had made unprecedented and far-reaching compromise proposals at the July Camp David summit. Yet the response of the Palestinian leadership was a rejection of compromise and a concerted decision to return to the violence and terrorism which was to have been renounced in 1993, as the basic, fundamental prerequisite of the Israel-Palestine peace process.

The peace process has already brought tangible economic and social benefits to the territories under the administration of the Palestinian Authority. This has been especially true during periods of relative calm. In 1998, the gross national product for these areas grew by an impressive 8 per cent. In 1999, Palestinian unemployment decreased by 13 per cent, much of that due to improved Israeli-Palestinian neighbourly relations, which permitted to daily entry of over 100,000 Palestinians into Israel, where they were employed in a variety of sectors.

I will spare the Assembly a long list of statistics which confirm the positive economic developments that have occurred as a result of peace and cooperation. But suffice it to mention that a number of United Nations reports, including the latest report of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East and that of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories, point to the tangible rewards that the peace process has brought to the Palestinian people.

I wish to stress that these positive developments were a direct result of the peace process and the period of relative calm that preceded the recent Palestinian violence. In choosing to return to violence and terrorism, the Palestinians are undoing many of the gains that have been achieved. By seeking to achieve their political goals through force rather than by negotiation, the Palestinians are bringing economic calamity upon themselves, by their own hand.

Throughout the disturbances, Israel has been making every effort to minimize the hardship to the Palestinian population. Israeli forces are acting on clear orders not to harm utilities in order to ensure normal uses of water, electricity and other services. Clearly, in

a time of violence, some local incidents may occur, but we are committed to dealing with them immediately.

I would like to take this opportunity to stress that despite the recent eruption of Palestinian violence, Israel has continued to maintain the free flow of humanitarian assistance and food to the areas under Palestinian Authority administration. In this regard, Israel has expedited the transfer of over 100 shipments of humanitarian aid — in excess of 2,000 tons — to the Palestinian Authority since the outbreak of the violence.

This assistance, which has more than quadrupled in volume since last year, passes through Israeli ports of entry exempt of customs and import taxes. Due to this unprecedented volume, Israel has established a special task force which works seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to accelerate the transfer of assistance to the Palestinians, despite the fact that Israeli port officials have been targeted and even killed in the violence and now must work under armed protection. The processing time — usually about two months — has been reduced to less than a week and even shipments from hostile countries, such as Syria, Libya and Iraq, have been facilitated through special approval.

Any movement of goods and persons through Israeli and Israeli-administered areas is restricted only to the extent that such movement impacts directly upon security. The movement of fuel serves as a good example. Israeli tanker trucks can no longer travel safely in the West Bank and Gaza in order to make deliveries. In Gaza, sufficient fuel pipelines exist to take up the slack; however, in the West Bank, deliveries must be transferred to Palestinian trucks at the crossing points. It is a shortage of such Palestinian vehicles and the real threat to the lives of Israeli drivers — rather than an Israeli policy of embargo, as alleged by the Palestinian observer — which have been affecting fuel supplies.

Israel looks forward to the restoration of the conditions which would again make this freedom of movement possible without risking the lives of its citizens to Palestinian sniper fire on the roads or Palestinian terrorist bombings in public places. It should be stressed that the current violence comes on the heels of the Camp David summit, at which the Government of Israel displayed an unprecedented willingness to compromise for the sake of peace. Had an agreement been concluded at that time, not only would the present situation have been avoided, but the Palestinian people would have reaped even greater economic rewards than those of the past several years.

It is unacceptable that, after refusing to even consider Israel's peace overtures, the Palestinians now seek to blame Israel for their current predicament. It is our sincerest hope that there will be a return to calm and stability in the region that will permit us to return to the path of cooperation with our Palestinian neighbours.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I did not wish to become involved in this discussion, but I am compelled to address the unfounded allegations and lies of the Israeli representative. I had no desire to answer his lengthy statement of a few moments ago.

To speak of the politicization of this issue is too absurd. How can we speak of assistance to the Palestinian people and urge the donor countries to meet their commitments at a time when the Palestinian economy and the entire infrastructure are being wilfully destroyed by heavy weapons? The report of the United Nations Special Coordinator in the Occupied Territories emphasizes that the destruction of our infrastructure — including our agriculture and our public and private buildings — and the embargo are preventing the Palestinians and their products from moving not only between the occupied territories and Israel and the outer world, but even between villages. In order to ensure that our villages and towns remain isolated from one another, Israel has physically destroyed our roads with explosives.

With respect to the comprehensive blockade of the Palestinian territories, I would like once again to refer to the reports of the Special Coordinator and others, including non-governmental humanitarian organizations. One result of the encirclement is that our wounded cannot be moved from one region to another, leading to several deaths.

Over the course of the past two weeks, Israel has allowed fuel deliveries to Gaza only today. The Gaza Strip was totally isolated for over two weeks and no goods entered. Some reports indicate the genuine concern that we are approaching famine conditions.

How can one fail to speak of Israeli procedures, specifically under this agenda item, at a time when Israel has frozen the assets of the Palestinian Authority,

especially its income from the transport of Palestinian goods through Israel, estimated in the millions of dollars. How can we fail to speak of all these procedures at a time when the losses exceed $900 million — that is, three times the assistance provided by the donor countries? How can one speak of humanitarian assistance when Israel is avoiding and blocking the implementation of projects and programmes to improve the living conditions of the Palestinian people?

I do not want to add to the long list of Israeli violations, but the fundamental and pivotal cause of this crisis must be pointed out. Israel must understand and recognize that the root of this crisis is the continuation of its illegal military occupation. That is the crux of the issue. As soon as the illegal occupation ends, the region will be able to seek to improve the living conditions of its peoples and strengthen regional cooperation.

Another factor that very clearly inflamed the crisis was the existence of the settlements. I wish very briefly to summarize the settlement situation in Gaza. There are 5,000 illegal Israeli settlers in Gaza, occupying 40 per cent of the territory's land. This is a poor strip of land lacking sufficient water resources. A mere 5,000 settlers have 40 per cent of the land, while 1.2 million people must make do, in very difficult circumstances, with the other 60 per cent of Gaza's 30 square kilometres. I wished to cite this one example as evidence of the nature of the new apartheid system being implemented by the Israelis in the occupied territories.

I reiterate that the crux of the crisis is the occupation. As soon as the occupation ceases, living conditions for the Palestinian people will improve, and they will be able to live in freedom and dignity like other peoples of the world.

The President: I now call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): It appears that perhaps the self-evident logic of cause and effect continues to escape our Palestinian neighbours. Almost every speaker in today's debate has stressed the obvious negative impact of violence and conflict on social and economic well-being and humanitarian assistance. The case of the Palestinian decision to resort to violence and its consequent negative impact on the Palestinian economy and society is no exception. The obvious solution is negotiation and dialogue, rather than confrontation and violence. I would remind the Palestinian observer of what he must already know: the permanent disposition of the settlements and the disputed territories, which he raised in his reply, is part and parcel of this negotiation, and when the Palestinian violence has ended, the negotiations will again be able to resume. It would serve us all well to remember - and to remind those who have perhaps forgotten - the words of the ancient proverb: people who live in glass houses should not throw stones.

The President: I now call on the representative of Palestine, who wishes to speak a second time in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Jilani (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall be brief. I simply wanted to repeat that the most atrocious forms of violence and terrorism are the occupation by force of the territory of others and the imposition of military occupation on an entire people. The territories to which the representative of Israel referred are not the subject of dispute; they are occupied territories. Israel is the only State Member of the United Nations that has been singled out as an occupying Power.

(spoke in English)

It is the only State in the United Nations that has been named in 25 Security Council resolutions as "the occupying Power". These territories, which the representative of Israel referred to as "disputed", are, according to international law and Security Council resolutions, occupied territories. Israel must stop trying to shift the true concept of disputed territories — the territories that Israel is occupying beyond the 1947 partition plan — to include those that it occupied in 1967.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to inform members of some additions to the programme of work of the General Assembly.

On Wednesday morning, 29 November 2000, in addition to agenda item 38, "Zone of peace and cooperation of the South Atlantic", the General Assembly will also take up sub-item (i) of agenda item 17, "Appointment of the members of the Consultative Committee on the United Nations Development Fund

for Women", agenda item 33, "Culture of peace", to take action on draft resolution A/55/L.43; agenda item 37, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the special session of the General Assembly in this regard", to take action on draft resolution A/55/L.40; and agenda item 174, "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order", to take action on draft resolution A/55/L.15/Rev.2.

The meeting rose at 5.35 p.m.